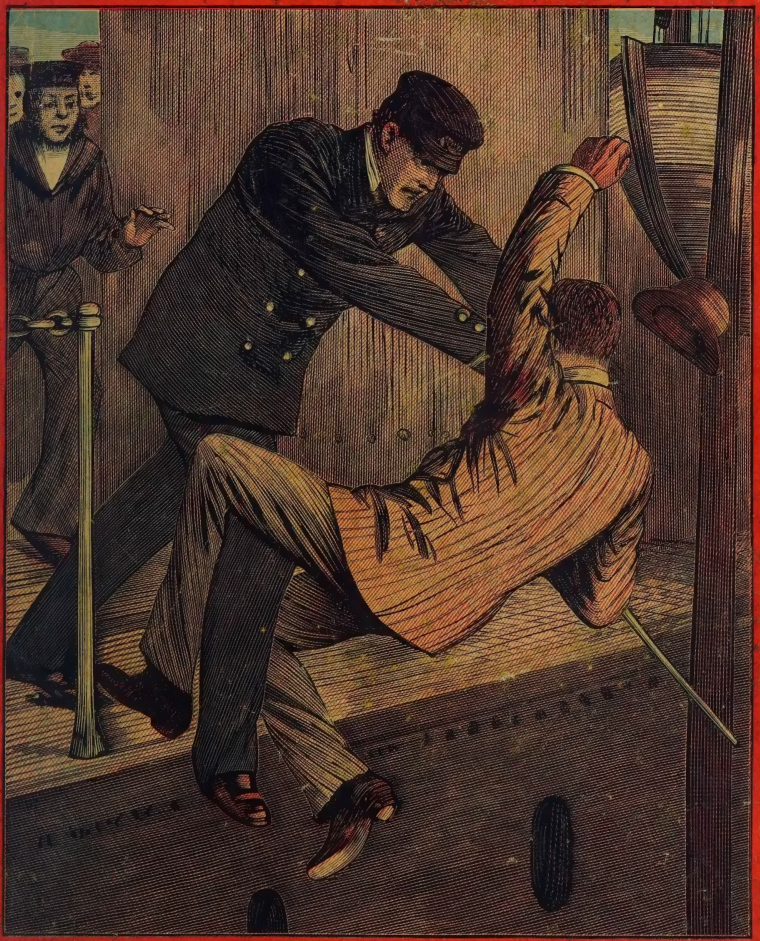
BY THE AUTHOR OF "DODO AND I", etc

ADA TRISCOTT,

CAPTAIN ANDREW HAGGARD.



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Captain Andrew Haggard is unknown. He declines his dedication from Parker, but is evidently an Englishman. His full name is Andrew Charles Parker Haggard. He was an author, poet, historian, and novelist, and elder brother of the better known Henry Rider Haggard. He was born in Norfolk in 1854, entered the army in 1873, and served through the Egyptian war. He is now Lieutenant-Colonel.

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ADA TRISCOTT

A Novel

BY

CAPTAIN ANDREW HAGGARD, D.S.O.

AUTHOR OF "DODO AND I"

LONDON

SPENCER BLACKETT

35, ST. BRIDE STREET, LUDGATE CIRCUS, E.C.

1891

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"*Hæc olim meminisse juvabit.*"

TO

LILIAS EATON,

IN RECOLLECTION OF

MANY PLEASANT DAYS IN PLEASANT PLACES,

This Book is inscribed.

That its dedication now, after long years, may be accepted as a slight proof that the words of the old Latin motto hold good in this prosaic age, as they did in centuries past, is the earnest wish of her old friend,

THE AUTHOR.

PARIS, *January*, 1890.

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ADA TRISCOTT.

CHAPTER I.

A SUBALTERN'S QUARTERS.

"WELL, Colonel, is anything settled about the move yet?"

The scene is the citadel at Plymouth, and the speaker is a well-made, good-looking young subaltern in the —th Regiment now quartered in that favourite station for soldiers.

"Ah, Treleaven, is that you? Oh, yes, the order has come for us to move across the bridge into Devonport next Friday, and very glad I shall be of the change myself, as we shall have the whole regiment together again in the Raglan Barracks. I fancy it will save you, too, a few half-crowns in cab hire on wet days, eh, my lad?"

Jack Treleaven flushed just a little at the innuendo conveyed in this remark, and the amusement it evidently afforded to his brother officers standing round; but he was equal to the occasion, and answered readily:

"Ah, yes, sir, the Devonport station is close to the barracks, and, as the South-Western is the line I generally

use for my fishing excursions, it *will* save me something in cabs."

"Well fielded, Jack," sang out one of the group, a little dark man with merry brown eyes. "I think you must have been sharpening your wits with the point of your fishing-rod; however, as I am going down into Devonport myself this afternoon, I shall be able to tell your Stoke friends the reason you are looking forward to our change of quarters, and no doubt they will be highly gratified."

"You shut up, 'Bung,'" answered Jack, irreverently, to his senior officer, Captain Lifton, "and pay attention to your beer; that's only the second glass you've had since parade, so of course you can hardly be expected to know what you are talking about yet. When your wits have been brightened up by another three or four glasses, perhaps you'll understand what you're saying."

There was a general laugh at this mild witticism, for Lifton's, or rather "Bung's" partiality for beer was too well known to admit of doubt. Meantime, Treleaven effected his escape to his own quarters, where he was shortly after joined by Lifton himself.

"Well, old 'sonny,'" said the latter worthy, "what do you think of the move?" for these officers of the —th, having been quartered some time in what Plymothians call the "three towns," were given to affecting the Devonshire expressions and dialect. "I suppose," he continued, "we shan't see you very often at mess now; but, upon my word, how you can go on eating the old chap's dinners, and filling yourself with his dry Monopole, beats me; when you know you have about as much idea of marrying Ada Triscott as you have of your other 'flame' up along—Miss Nellie Watson. I think it is an infernal shame the way

you carry on with three or four girls at once; make them all believe you are desperately in love with them, and then leave them to find out you are only trifling with their young affections after all. However, you take care, my boy, you'll be getting yourself into some confounded scrape one of these days. Some old governor will 'cut up rough,' or you will have the brothers at you; or else you'll have the girl swearing she will never leave you, and coming up to your quarters in broad daylight, so as to let everybody know she means it. Why really, Jack, being a west-country man yourself, and knowing what passionate natures these Devonshire girls have, I wonder you are not just a little more careful. I know I have not much right to preach, still, take my advice for once; do as I say, not as I do, and be a bit careful about Ada Triscott; if not you'll regret it, on my honour you will."

Jack was sitting in his shirt-sleeves smoking a pipe, as Lifton delivered this homily. He was a tall, good-looking young fellow, of about twenty-six or twenty-seven, with blue eyes, a long fair moustache, of which he was not a little proud, and a splendid set of teeth that seemed to light up his whole face as he laughed or smiled, making his frank, pleasant manner quite irresistible even to his enemies—who said he was selfish and conceited. They were, however, very few, and, though hot-tempered and rather opinionated, he was a general favourite in his regiment—always a good criterion of a man's character. He looked more serious just now, as he answered:

"I know you're right, old man, but I can't help it. I was born so. I always was in scrapes about women, and I always shall be, I suppose, until I am comfortably married. If I come across a pretty girl, I can't for the

life of me help making myself agreeable to her, whether she's a shop-girl or the Lady Harriet Thingummy, and if they choose to imagine I am in love with them, it's their fault, not mine. Why, very often I don't want to make love to them at all, but, after I have known them a bit, I find them expecting it from me as a right, so I am obliged to be *empressé* in my manner, and all that sort of thing, just to please them, and for fear of their being disappointed. It's all because I'm so d—d good-natured, I don't like to hurt their feelings."

"Well, yes," interrupted Lifton, meditatively, "it does seem a 'd—d good-natured' thing to run the chance of wrecking all a girl's future happiness, just for the enjoyment of the present moment."

"However," continued Jack, not appearing to notice this sarcasm, "although I do know you to be an old humbug, who does not 'practise what he preaches,' I will, just to show there is no ill-feeling, take your advice this once, and, as I hear there are plenty of peal up the Tavy after the flood, I'll just take my rod out to Horrabridge every day for the next week or two, and won't turn up at the dance on the *Adelaide* or any of the others for a bit, where Ada is likely to be; for we have been going it rather hard lately, I'll admit. I shan't have much chance of seeing her for the rest of the autumn, for they are going to the north of Devonshire. I think I shall get leave for a week to start with, the day after we get to Devonport, and stop at the mill at Denham Bridge. There! What do you think of that for a good resolution?"

"Not so bad for you, if you only keep it. Let's see, Denham Bridge is exactly three miles and a half from Horrabridge; and of course you will not be able to leave

your fishing to walk to that lovely place, all the way up-hill, to see the Watsons quite every day; and, although I know perfectly well you calculate upon the girls walking down to see you fish, still I don't think their energy will carry them that distance more than once in the week to spoil your fishing. Well, come, let's go to lunch, and afterwards we'll take a turn on the Hoe, and do George Street as usual."

CHAPTER II.

A WEST-COUNTRY BEAUTY.

ADA TRISCOTT, the subject of the conversation in the last chapter, came of a good old Cornish stock. There are, as every one knows, endless Triscotts in the west country; but William Triscott of Penallyn, her uncle, always declared that his was the oldest branch of the family, and Ada, who had lived with him since her father's death six years before the commencement of this story, firmly believed him, and loved to listen to his stories of dead and gone Triscotts and their doings. Her mother, who had been an invalid for many years, did not long survive her husband, and died at Penallyn Hall some months after, leaving her orphan boy and girl to the care of their uncle; since which time, William Triscott—a childless widower himself—had been as a father to Ada and her sailor brother George.

They had neither of them been left penniless; and, although their father had not been rich, being the younger brother, he had been able to leave a small independence to his widow, which, divided equally among the children at her death, gave them each about two hundred a year. George the sailor, about five years the senior, came into possession of his share at once; but, as Ada was then only about thirteen, her uncle had carefully allowed the interest

to accumulate for her; and she was now, at nineteen, the possessor of about five thousand pounds safely invested.

But Ada never troubled her head about these matters; and her uncle it was who defrayed all expenses of her education and gave her pocket-money when she wanted it, for she was indeed as a daughter to him.

Ada was not tall, she was about the medium height; but so beautifully made that her whole figure, though exquisitely lithe and graceful, seemed at the same time to indicate the perfection of health and strength. From being accustomed to ramble about the rocks and accompany her brother in his fishing and birds'-nesting expeditions, she had early become as sure-footed as a goat, and could even now, if she wished it, have climbed the tallest tree with ease; but though she considered it incumbent on her, now she was a grown-up young lady, to give up such freaks as that, she would still scramble up a cliff for a fern, or creep along a rocky ledge for gulls' eggs to add to the splendid collection she and her brother had commenced years ago, and which was one of the first things she would show, with not unmerited pride, to any visitors to Penallyn Hall.

George was at present away in China with his ship. He was a fine manly young fellow, and had, at the time our story opens, been two years a lieutenant on board H.M. corvette *Raven*. Open-handed to a fault, always falling in love and falling out again, a good sailor, a good dancer, and a good fellow, he was one of the most popular officers in the ship, and was adored by the "blue-jackets," who would have followed him anywhere.

If George had a weak spot in his nature, it was love for his little sister, and, although he hated letter-writing, he

proved his affection for her by writing constantly long accounts of himself and any expedition he might be engaged in. However, since his vessel had left the Malay waters, some six months before, very little had been heard of him at home; from which it was to be argued that nothing eventful had occurred to disturb the "even tenor of his way."

CHAPTER III.

A TOUCH OF NATURE.

THE Triscotts generally spent a good part of the year in Plymouth, or, to be more accurate, in Stoke, which is a suburb of Devonport.

Here William Triscott owned a pleasant little house in Tamar Terrace, overlooking the People's Park, and Hamoaze, with its picturesque old hulks, which serve as a perpetual reminder of the ancient maritime glories of England.

Nothing strikes one more than the view to be obtained from the People's Park. Close below, on the one side, lies Heigham Dockyard, with its queer-looking towers and shears, whilst Morice Town with its teeming population, lying almost at the dockyard gates, serves to remind one that thousands of families are supported by the ceaseless toil going on within those massive walls.

Beyond, lie the shining waters of the Tamar, dotted here and there with old worn-out men-of-war, bounded, on the opposite side, by the fair hills of Cornwall. The peaceful contrast thus formed with the ceaseless noise and bustle on one of its banks, is both remarkable and impressive.

On the other side, a view is presented of the blue waters of the Sound, and of that marvel of engineering

skill, Plymouth Breakwater, under the lee of which the largest men-of-war can lie in safety throughout the raging of the fiercest gales.

Above the Sound, tower the heights of Staddon, crowned with its fort and lofty wall, which, only built on the seaward end of the "heights" to serve as a stop-bullet for the sometimes wild shooting of the British soldier, has many a time proved a veritable "beacon of joy" to the homeward-bound British sailor. But to attempt a description of the view from the People's Park at Stoke, with its alternations of fortifications close at hand, the three towns down below, the shipping, and the lovely scenery of wooded Mount-Edgecumbe, across Hamoaze, is to attempt to paint such a mixture of the realities of life with the beauties of nature, the works of man with the works of the Creator, as can in no other part of the world be seen to blend into such a harmonious whole. Surely the dullest soul, the giddiest girl, would sometimes pause to survey such a scene, and exclaim: "It is beautiful!"

Such a scene it was that met the eye of Ada Triscott, from the balcony of her uncle's house, one July morning before breakfast, a few days after the change of quarters of the —th from Plymouth to Devonport. But truth compels me to admit that it is not the gleaming waters of the Sound which arrest her attention, nor is it on the verdant beauties of Mount-Edgecumbe that her gaze is fixed; although to a casual observer, pausing a moment to admire her graceful attitude and fresh young beauty, such might seem to be the case. No, it is upon Raglan Barracks that soft beam is concentrated. Distant but a few hundred yards, the bugle-calls sound clearly through the morning air, and Ada has not passed so many summers in Stoke

without learning to know the import of these, to outsiders, generally mysterious sounds. Alas! that I should be compelled to say so; but it is nevertheless a fact that the South Raglan Barracks have, with their discordant noises of drummings and bugling, more attraction for Ada, just at present, than all the surrounding beauties of nature put together. She is looking musingly on a façade of windows which she knows to be those of the officers' quarters, and her thoughts run somewhat after this fashion:

"I wonder if Mr. Treleaven has come back yet? From what he told me, that must be his room at the end, but I did not see any light in it when I went to bed last night. He told me he chose it because it was farthest away from the noise in the mess, which always made his head ache. I wonder if he expected me to believe that?" and the girl, unconsciously, laughed to herself a merry peal, disclosing such a set of pearly teeth between her red lips that, had you been there, O reader, you would, be you male or female, have fallen in love with our heroine on the spot. "There goes the breakfast bugle," she continued; "perhaps he is on duty, and going round to ask the men if they have 'any complaints,'" and again she laughed, for Jack had, not long since, given her a highly-amusing description of the arduous duties a British subaltern has to perform in the middle of the night, *i.e.*, at eight o'clock a.m.

But we can no longer intrude upon her thoughts, for they were interrupted at this moment by the loud, cheery voice of her uncle, calling:

"Now, my child, come along; breakfast, breakfast! eight o'clock. I'm starving."

It is somewhat significant that Miss Triscott's first morning thoughts should have been of Jack Treleaven;

and had that worthy, who, I may as well say at once, had not returned to Devonport, been aware of the fact, perhaps he might have regretted having asked for and obtained an extra three days' leave from his indulgent commanding-officer.

That afternoon, as Ada had just attired herself to go into Plymouth, for tea with some friends, her uncle being out, a Captain Hemmings was announced. A commander in the navy, and, in these days of slow promotion, one of the luckiest men in the service; his enemies—and they were not a few—said that his rapid advancement was more due to luck and his high connections than to merit. Luck he certainly had, good interest also, but he had never failed either to take advantage of the former or to work the latter; and having recently distinguished himself in a slaving affair, in which he received a nasty wound, he had been appointed, while yet a very junior lieutenant, to the commandership of the *Royal Adelaide*, stationed at Plymouth, an envied berth.

He was a good-looking fellow and a great sportsman. An agreeable man, but one who knew how to say disagreeable things; on the whole, more feared than liked by his juniors in the service, for Captain Hemmings—to use the honorary title a commander always gets—was one of those who never forgot to let his subordinates know he was senior officer. This was naturally—even in the navy, where officers are much more "stand-off" to each other than in the sister service—galling to men who, although much his senior in years, found themselves his inferior in rank. He had been a shipmate and friend of George Triscott, who had been with him, and indeed had saved his life, in the above-mentioned affair, for which George had been duly mentioned in despatches, but, not having Richard Hem-

mings' interest at the Admiralty, he was not also promoted, but quietly forgotten.

Whatever character Lieutenant Hemmings may have borne on board the *Raven*, where, with the exception of George Triscott — who got on with everybody — he had hardly a friend; still, want of gratitude was not one of this young officer's faults, and one of his first acts on coming home was to call on his old messmate's uncle to tell him all about his nephew to whom he owed his life. He made acquaintance with Ada at this time, and was struck with her beauty and open manners; she, of course, was naturally pleased at hearing her brother so much praised; and thus a considerable friendship had grown up between the pair.

"Well, Miss Triscott," he commenced, "I fear I have come at the wrong time; you are evidently just off to the vortex of fashion in Plymouth."

"Oh, not at all, Captain Hemmings. I am only going up to the Hoe, to afternoon tea with the Parkers. I think you know them; but there is no hurry; sit down, please, and tell me everything about everybody. I wonder you are not worked to death with preparations for your dance to-morrow."

"Oh, well, when you like to go I will accompany you up in the tram to the Parkers. What a blessing that tram is! and also what a blessing that no one thinks or sets the fashion of calling it *infra dig.* to go in it! As for our dance to-morrow, we shall do our best; but, as you are coming, its success is of course a foregone conclusion."

"Now, Captain Hemmings, you had better take care! I've got a very large book here, and if you make fun of me like that I shall send it straight at you, so beware! Now,

don't chaff—what have you been doing with yourself all these days?"

"Well," said the commander, looking admiringly at the lovely face, "yesterday I was fishing for peal on the Tavy, I grieve to say without success; not so, though, another friend of yours."

"Who do you mean—Mr. Treleaven? Oh, I hope he has had good sport; I believe he is really a good fisherman."

"That is to say, I'm not. Well, never mind, I forgive you. He certainly seems to know who to take to land his fish for him, for, having just lost one myself, I chanced to stumble on Mr. Jack Treleaven in the act of having a peal of about four pounds landed for him in a most masterly manner, by a very pretty young lady, who seemed quite up to the business—but I shouldn't tell you, though, I forgot. I won't say another word."

Ada flushed, and said, with a slight shade of anger in her voice:

"What nonsense! As if it mattered to me who lands Mr. Treleaven's fish;" then, laughingly, "he may be landed himself, for all I care!" but whether that laugh was quite sincere or not, after the soliloquy of the morning, who can tell? "But, come, Captain Hemmings," she went on, "who was the lady? Do I know her? and is Mr. Treleaven coming in for your dance? He is such a splendid dancer, you know, I hope he will come."

Captain Hemmings looked at her curiously for a moment before answering; if there had been any trace of annoyance in her tone or manner it had quite faded out as she asked these questions, and she sat so composedly tying together some roses for her dress, that even the suspicious captain felt baffled, but, recovering himself quickly:

"Yes, I think you do know the fair *pêcheuse*," said he, "Miss Nellie Watson. I fancy she is coming in, but, unless she has sufficient weight to persuade Mr. Treleaven to leave his fishing now the water is in good ply, I really cannot answer for him. As you do not know, you can't expect me to be better informed. However, he's such a good fellow, I hope he will think better of it and come."

Captain Hemmings thoroughly understood the art of "damning with faint praise." Having now said all he deemed necessary, he suggested an adjournment to Plymouth and they left the house, Ada still laughing and chatting gaily; but, for all her gaiety, she did not now feel quite as happy as in the morning.

CHAPTER IV.

A QUAINT FAMILY AND A GOOD APPETITE.

THAT same evening, at about eight o'clock, a little party of four might have been seen wending its way across the summit of Roborough Down, which is a kind of off-shoot of Dartmoor. The spot upon which this party halted was perhaps as lovely as any throughout a district celebrated for its wild picturesqueness of hill, stream, and dale. The young fellow with a cast of flies round his hat, we know already; also his friend, Captain Lifton, who has been out to Horrabridge to see how the fishing progresses. The rest of the party consists of two young ladies, who play no unimportant part hereafter in this story.

Nellie and Mary Watson were as handsome girls as any of those to be seen from time to time at Plymouth balls and parties.

Nellie the elder was about twenty-four; she had fine features, a brilliant complexion, but her eyes were the chief beauty of her face; they were large and brown with a bright restless expression, until she became specially interested, when, as one of her youthful victims had once remarked, "they seem to go right through you and out at the other side!" This had of course been repeated to Miss Nellie, who, as she said, "scored" the next time she met him, by

gazing at him fixedly for fully five minutes, and then saying in an audible whisper to her sister: "I wonder if they have got out at the other side yet!" to the utter discomfiture and confusion of the wretched young sub.

Unfortunately, this independence of speech and manner sometimes degenerated into a "slanginess" which spoilt her. She had been so accustomed, for the last six or seven years, to doing exactly as she pleased, that she had got into a habit of imagining that she was always to have her own way about everything, and was very fond of laying down the law to her numerous male friends and admirers, as to what they should and should not do. Nor was she at all above contradicting flatly, when she chose to disagree with you. That habit frequently estranged her friends for a time, though they generally came back again better friends than before; for there was an originality and attractiveness about her very whims and fancies which made one like her, no matter how quarrelsome and dictatorial she chose to be.

She was a clever and talented girl with all her oddities, and had as good a knowledge of the world as many women double her age, with sufficient strength of mind at the same time to keep what she knew to herself; and although the recipient of secrets of all kinds, both from women and her semi-platonic male friends, she had never been known, even when in her worst of tempers, to divulge a word or repeat the most trivial story told her in confidence. She was thoroughly safe, and also, with all her knowledge of men and things, a woman with whom no one ever dreamed of taking the smallest liberty. Indeed, any one doing so would scarcely have dared to repeat the experiment. Her father —sensible man!—had long since given up trying to control

her; whimsical himself, he knew that his eldest daughter took after him; and, with the strongest affection and admiration for both his daughters, he felt he could trust them in great things, so left them in minor ones to their own devices. He would still, however, consider it incumbent upon him, about once in a year or six months, to exercise his parental authority in some way or other, when he and Nellie would have a desperate battle, in which it must be confessed she always came off victorious, telling him, when all other argument failed, to "shut up and mind his own business," and finally driving him "with great slaughter" into the study, where, having apostrophised the book-shelves for half an hour or so on the subject of his wilful, headstrong, impertinent, and undutiful daughters, he would be kissed and forgiven by them.

Mary Watson was two years younger than her sister. Half a head taller, and built altogether in a larger mould, she equalled, many said surpassed her sister in good looks. She had the bluest eyes, the finest hair, and the best complexion on Dartmoor. Although partaking somewhat of her father's humorous nature, she was wanting in the ready wit and *esprit* of her sister, and did not therefore receive as much general admiration. She was, nevertheless, a clever girl in her quiet way, and in temper so sweet and self-denying, that Mollie, as she was always called, seemed the personification of a happy woman.

The sisters were much attached to one another. The fiery Nellie would sometimes try to get up a quarrel, but it was impossible to ruffle Mollie's perfect temper; the only reply to these attacks would be a laugh and a few queer words of chaff, which generally ended in the former's joining in the laugh against herself.

They were both good artists, but whereas Nellie, if not perfectly satisfied with every detail, would get into a rage and tear up a picture she had spent an entire morning at, or leave it unnoticed on her easel for weeks, Mollie worked away so patiently and perseveringly at her oil paintings—chiefly moorland landscapes—that they were already becoming known, and were, she would tell you, quite a little source of income to her.

Such are the two Miss Watsons, as they stand before you, reader, on the summit of Roborough, within ten minutes' walk of their home.

"Well, Captain Lifton, that's settled," said Nellie, "you come with us and have some grub, and go home by the late train; that is, if your Damon here can spare you for that short time. I am sure you are dying to walk back to the mill with him to-night to get a good chance of abusing us behind our backs. However, I'm not so certain that Mr. Treleaven would not prefer your room to your company *this* evening."

"What on earth are you driving at now, Miss Watson?" said Jack.

"Oh, it's all very well your looking so indignant, Mr. Treleaven; but I'm not quite a fool, you know, and, to say the least of it, it's rather queer that, the only evening you should have consented to come over, Laura Luscombe should also have come into Horrabridge. But you're quite right not to walk back alone, especially along a haunted road!"

Jack looked a little annoyed but said nothing, while Nellie continued:

"I suppose, Captain Lifton, you are burning with curiosity to see our 'Maid of the Mill'; of course Damon

has told you there is something else to keep him out here besides fishing."

"Well," said Lifton, with a mischievous glance of his merry brown eyes at Mollie, which she seemed to understand perfectly, "I rather thought there was something besides fishing to keep Jack here, but upon my word it's the first I've heard of any 'Maid of the Mill,' and, as he tells me all his secrets, I think you must be wrong for once."

"That's quite right, honour among thieves; of course you won't split, but we know, don't we, Mollie?"

"Come along, Mollie," said Jack, "I'm sure you won't stop here to hear my character destroyed by your bad sister. Let us go and eat up the tea before she gets a chance. I know how to punish you, Miss Watson. If you have a really weak point, it's your appetite."

There was a general laugh at this, for Nellie's good appetite was an old joke against her.

"That's right, Mr. Treleaven," said Mollie, "jump on her while she is down; she says she never gets any one to look after her at supper half as well as you do, so if I were you I should certainly not come in for the ball after all these unkind remarks. Now then, off!"

So saying, and accompanied by Jack, she started off at a run down the hill, jumping over the heather and bracken like a fawn, and heedless of the cries and entreaties of the pair left at the top "to stop and give them a chance." They ran until they were out of sight, and in a few minutes had gained the hospitable Moor Lodge, the home of the Watsons.

They found Mr. Watson already at his meal, for it was a house where everybody looked after themselves, and went in and came out as they pleased; and, under Mollie's

general supervision as housekeeper, this principle seemed to suit them all thoroughly.

Mr. Watson welcomed Jack heartily, and then turning to Mollie asked:

"Where's Nellie?"

"Out on the moor with Captain Lifton," said Mollie.

"Oh, well," said her father, "I suppose they'll come in when she gets hungry. Sit down, Treleaven—you've done a wise thing to bring the only sensible member of the family to look after you."

Nellie and Captain Lifton appeared presently, and they all sat down to tea.

Conversation soon turned upon the subject of the ball on the *Adelaide*, and Mollie began by saying:

"Really, joking apart, and putting Nellie's appetite out of the question as a matter of no consequence, I shall be personally very much aggrieved if you don't come, for I had counted upon at least three good waltzes with you; we both know our steps suit each other perfectly, and we haven't had a dance together for so long. However, I suppose I shall have to sit out and become a wall-flower like Nellie, that is if it is one of her nights for calling herself *passée*."

There was considerable amusement caused at the idea of Mollie's sitting out for want of a partner. She was generally reckoned the best dancer at any of the Assembly or other balls, and had not ever, in the memory of man, been known to sit out a dance. Her sister was not so fond of dancing, consequently nothing like so good a dancer—still, with her beautiful face and figure, if for no other reason, she might have danced everything, and had her choice besides of all the best *partis* in the room. But one

of the quaint girl's latest freaks had been to say she was too old for round dances, and to sit out with the chaperons, dance after dance, to the annoyance of her many admirers. However, as she said herself, she was "all there" when supper began; and there was as much emulation among the men to take her in to supper as there was to get a dance from her sister. Jack Treleaven had lately been the favoured one, and had been in the habit of keeping two dances vacant on his programme for this express purpose, and, as Miss Watson gave out that no one else looked after her so well on that important occasion, he was considered a lucky fellow to be in her good graces.

"Now, Captain Lifton," said Mollie, "won't you try to persuade Mr. Treleaven to give up his fishing and come to the ball?"

"Bung" looked rather confused at this suggestion, for he was not quite prepared to fall in with it. Visions of Ada Triscott and a recent conversation he had had with Mr. Jack concerning that young lady, rose in his mind, and he thought, on the whole, that Jack was safer where he was; so he answered:

"Well, Miss Watson, if I had such flattering remarks made about my dancing, etc., as Jack has, I should not be able to resist any longer. But then, you see, I'm not a fisherman. They tell me time, tide, and fish wait for no man. Captain Hemmings, whom I saw this morning, told me Mr. Treleaven's success in that line was entirely due to his being able to get the morning's fishing. And if he does not get Thursday morning, he is not likely to get another for some time; for the colonel has been kicking up a row about leave, and nothing vexes him more than when a man has applied for an extension, and after giving him all the

trouble about signing it and making it square with the general, his coming back before it has expired."

It must be owned that Lifton was romancing a little in this statement anent the colonel, from beginning to end; but, as his intention was a good one, let us hope that the recording angel did not make a very black mark against his name. But it was all no good, for Nellie, laying down her knife and fork, and fixing her most penetrating look on him as she spoke, said, deliberately:

"Now, look here, Captain Lifton. If you think I am going to be done out of my supper by all the colonels and generals in the service, you're very much mistaken. There's only one man in the three towns who understands how to feed me properly, and that's your Damon, Jack Treleaven. Now, as my constitution is a particularly delicate one, I cannot afford to have it trifled with by the first comer. So, if Mr. Treleaven doesn't go, neither do I, and I shall have spoilt Mollie's best ball-dress, which I thought suited my style of beauty, and had therefore appropriated, for nothing. Now, Jack Treleaven, what do you say?"

A subdued chuckle, and "Go it, Nell!" was here heard from the arm-chair, whither Watson *père* had retired. Jack was now "hole-and-cornered" most completely.

"To go or not to go, that is the question," said Mollie, sententiously. "Think of my lost dance."

"And my lost supper," said Nellie.

"And my lost dress," from Mollie.

"And your lost fish," said Bung.

"And Nellie's lost temper;" this from the arm-chair.

"That decides it," said Jack, amid the general laughter, and with a queer look at Lifton. "Confound the fish, I'll go!"

CHAPTER V.

SOME SENTIMENT ON BOARD THE "ADELAIDE."

TO those who have never been at a dance on board a man-of-war, it may seem a matter of surprise that a ball on board ship can ever be a success. Some people have a kind of idea that all ships are, more or less, a sort of conglomeration of pitch and tar—those of the Royal Navy no less than others; and that ladies, if determined to go to a thing of the kind, should put on their oldest garments before starting, and indeed should expect, if ever they return at all, to do so having left the greater part of their habiliments adhering to the sides of the vessel, or minus a heel left in the oakum caulking of the seams. Little do such as these, and inexperienced land-lubbers generally, know of the height to which the ingenuity and hospitality of the British naval officer can attain, or how ably their instructions are carried out by those blue-jackets who are as much the sons of Terpsichore as of Neptune. No, when the naval officer does "break out," it is in good earnest; and, unless the elements are very much against him, his labour is rarely in vain.

On the occasion of the ball on board the *Adelaide*, everything was in favour of the sailors. The night was clear and warm, and the waters of Hamoaze were like a

mill-pond. Consequently, the steam-launches sent by the officers to the various landing-places in Plymouth and Devonport brought off batches of people thoroughly prepared to enjoy themselves, and not, as is sometimes the case, cargoes of half-drowned, three-quarters sea-sick, and wholly discontented persons. On this occasion not even "paterfamilias," as he comfortably stretched himself on the cushioned seats of the launch, had the slightest apology for a grumble, however much he might regret his after-dinner nap at home. The dancing took place on the upper deck, but, had you not known this beforehand, you might have thought it a very good imitation of fairy-land, for what with the wealth of exotics, fern and flowers, the flags covering every inch of boarding, and the Chinese lanterns, the whole place had been so transformed that the oldest blue-jacket on board must have been more inclined to imagine himself in the sailor's paradise, Fiddlers' Green, than on board one of Her Majesty's ships of war.

I cannot, however, attempt to describe all the arrangements made by the *Adelaides* for the comfort of their guests. Were I to do so, I might call some part of the ship by an unnautical name, and thereby bring down upon my devoted head the universal condemnation of every officer who ever has, or ever may serve on board one of these gallant old three-deckers.

Suffice it to state that there were comfortable snuggeries for the chaperons well out of the way of the dancers, and flirtation-corners with only two chairs, arranged everywhere on poop and quarter-deck, graduating away from the full light of what may be called the ball-room, to where nought but the very faintest ray of a Chinese lantern served to show a corner, and the proximity of its occupants, without

indiscreetly revealing their features. The strains of "Les Sirènes" had hardly died away when one of these far-away corners was occupied by Jack Treleaven and Ada Triscott. How lovely she looked, as leaning back, gently fanning herself, she turned her soft expressive eyes on Jack! Dark as it was, there was a light in them that set Jack's heart wildly beating under his mess jacket. Accustomed as he was to every phase of flirtation, he could not help saying to himself: "This is something more than I deserve, by heavens! Lifton was right, I ought never to speak to Ada again unless I ask her to marry me."

And yet, this was at that time about the very last thing that good-natured, good-looking, good-for-nothing young officer contemplated. His feelings, if analysed, would have been something as follows: He wished to have the prettiest girl in the place in love with him; he was flattered that she should show that preference for him in a marked manner, to the discomfiture of all rivals; and though feeling for her more than the usual passing fancy for a pretty face, and knowing himself sure of her love at any time, he still—with characteristic selfishness and love of amusement—would not see why that should prevent his showing marked attention to, and enjoying himself with, other girls in general, and Nellie Watson in particular.

Poor Ada! Jack was her first love; she had never even had a serious flirtation with any one before, and he was, she knew it, all the world to her. She had loved him since the first time she had seen his handsome face, and heard his pleasant, cheery voice, and her love had intensified day by day. She had not of course known him so long and so well, without seeing and knowing that he paid attention to other pretty girls besides herself;

but hers was no mean nature given to petty spites and jealousies. She worshipped her idol and king far too well not to place thorough trust and confidence in him; but, though she could not help letting him see unmistakably how much more he was to her than other men, her woman's pride made her do her best to conceal from him the real state of her loving, passionate heart.

"Oh! how I have enjoyed that waltz," she was saying. "I was so afraid you would not come back for the ball; Captain Hemmings told me yesterday he did not think you would, as you were far too lucky with the peal."

"Confound Hemmings! I wish he would mind his own business, and not trouble himself about me. Why, you know, Ada, that it was an impossibility for me to keep away, when I knew you were going to be here."

"How much of that do you expect me to believe, Mr. Treleaven, and how many times have you said that sort of thing before?" said Ada, merrily, for she was pleased at the speech. "I'm afraid you think we country girls will believe anything. It is fortunate for us that we don't quite do so, though."

"Upon my word, I do mean it, though," said Jack, taking her hand gently, which she tried to withdraw, but eventually left in his grasp; "you know there is nobody in the 'three towns,' or out of them, I would as soon dance with as yourself, or whose society I enjoy so much as yours, when only I am lucky enough to get it."

Ada was silent and sighed softly, and as Jack gazed intently into her eyes, the witchery of the moment was on them both. The grasp of their hands insensibly tightened, and Jack felt he did indeed, for once, mean every word he had said. Presently he commenced, in a low tone:

"Ada, if——" but the sentence was never completed, for at that moment a footstep was heard, and the shining epaulettes of a naval officer were seen approaching. Their hands separated, and as Ada rose, recognising her partner in Captain Hemmings, before he had discovered her, Jack, with something very like an oath in his heart, if not on his lips, had only just time to whisper, "The second extra, then, if you really can't give me another," before she was borne away from his side. He stood for a few moments, leaning over the ship's side, listening to the plashing of the tide, and then he too turned and joined the dancers.

That, however, was fated to be the last dance he was to have with Ada Triscott that night, for long before the second extra came off William Triscott had carried his niece off, back to Tamar Terrace, and bed.

Had Jack's sentence been finished, this story might have been ended here; but what trivial things alter our fate! Having sauntered back into the ball-room, Jack stood leaning moodily against the door, watching Ada's lissome figure encircled by the arm of Captain Hemmings, when he was aroused from his reverie by hearing a well-known voice behind, saying, in a slightly mocking tone,

> "Why so pale and wan, young sinner,
> Prithee, why so pale?
> Will, if looking well won't win her,
> Looking ill prevail?"

He turned round quickly with a look of annoyance, and was about to speak, but the comical expression of pensive sadness on Nellie Watson's face, for it was she, completely disarmed him, and they both burst out laughing; but Nellie, calling up a dismal look to her face again, said:

"Oh, no! I beg your pardon, that is not exactly what

I should have said, Mr. Treleaven; of course it is quite immaterial to you what you look like, still, you might cultivate your countenance a little as well as your moustache—which I know you only consider as a duty you owe to society—and hide your feelings. Now take a lesson from me, for I am determined to be gay, though I am positively pining for a dance with Captain Hemmings, who has been pretending not to see me all the evening. How nicely they dance together, don't they?"

"Pining for supper is much more like it," said Jack, ignoring the last query.

"Oh, well! 'Quand on n'a pas ce qu'on aime, il faut aimer ce qu'on a,' and I shall have to make love to supper instead of to Captain Hemmings, you to me instead of to Ada Triscott, and Ada to the commander of the *Adelaide*, instead of increasing your precious stock of self-conceit by showing every one that you are adored by the prettiest girl at the ball."

This speech set Jack's back up at once, for it wounded the very conceit Nellie referred to, and there is nothing so annoying to a conceited man as to know he is found out. He therefore began a quarrel, as the best way out of it. He did not choose to take up the part that referred to himself, but chose rather to reply:

"What right have you to speak of Miss Triscott in that way? One would think, to hear you run her down, that you are jealous of her."

Nellie's eyes flashed, but commanding her voice, she answered, in the same bantering tone:

"Well, so I am jealous of her, but only because she is monopolising the attentions of that delightful Captain Hemmings, whom I positively dote upon."

"You dote upon everybody—you'll be altogether in your dotage soon."

"Or you may," said Nellie, laughing; and that ended the quarrel for that time, which was beginning to look threatening. For their quarrels usually ended thus with a joke.

Mollie, who was passing with Lifton, stopped to say: "I thought you two people were going to have one of your usual fights; you looked so cross as we came along, I had quite made up my mind that this was to be another three weeks' fight, or rather three weeks' sulking-match. Pray don't irritate her, Mr. Treleaven, she is quite harmless if left alone, only a little eccentric. Captain Lifton, just explain, quietly, will you, that it is the nature of the animal, that's all; but he forgets that if he rouses its angry passions for his own amusement I shall have a dreadful time of it at home."

"Mollie, I will be the death of you," said Nellie, laughing.

"I'm afraid it is too late," said Lifton. "You see already she threatens to commit murder; but you know I look upon Jack in the light of her keeper, and he will probably produce a muzzle if she becomes dangerous."

"There will be two murders now instead of one," said Nellie, solemnly. "I warn you, Captain Lifton, that your blood will be upon your own head."

"I think now is the time to produce the muzzle if you have it about you," said Mollie to Jack, in a stage whisper; and with this parting shot the light-headed pair made their escape, leaving the late belligerents in a thoroughly good humour with each other, which lasted for the rest of the evening.

It is true they indulged in a good deal of mutual chaff, but it verged rather more on the sentimental than anything else. Although Nellie always pretended to hate sentiment, she nevertheless sometimes indulged unintentionally in a little of it herself when in the society of a man she knew and liked as she did Jack, whose mentor she pretended and imagined herself to be. Somehow the rôle of mentor, when undertaken by a pretty woman, and carried out, late at night in a ball-room, is rarely displeasing either to teacher or pupil. Advice leads to moralising, and often, after a few glasses of champagne, moralising frequently becomes sentiment. At any rate, Jack and Nellie parted that evening —or morning—on uncommonly good terms with each other, and vowing that they never would fight any more, they were too great friends for that, they said, and liked, respected, and esteemed each other far too much! On the whole, they thought the ball a success.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE HOE AND HOMEWARD BOUND.

ADA had also enjoyed the ball. She had regretted not being able to give Jack more dances; still he had had a couple, and then the *tête-à-tête* in the dark, on the poop, had been worth to her half-a-dozen more. She had seen Jack consoling himself for her loss during the remainder of the evening with Miss Watson; but not being of a jealous temperament, unless regularly aroused, that did not disturb her mind in the very least. She knew also of the sort of pseudo-platonic affection that existed between the young lieutenant and Nellie, and often made it the subject of merry banter. Indeed, the Watsons were Jack's oldest friends in the neighbourhood, and, considering their house was always open to him day or night, it is not surprising that he should have been on the best of terms with them, nor did Ada think it so.

However, it was at Tamar Terrace he passed the most of his spare time for the next week or two, as the departure of the Triscotts had been postponed owing to the news that H.M.S. *Raven* was not only suddenly ordered home, but well on her way, having already reached the Suez Canal. William Triscott, who was very fond of his nephew, determined to await his arrival. Apart from the pleasure that

expecting her brother gave her, Ada found another and a deeper one which increased as the days went on. Her uncle and Treleaven were very good friends, and as she was left to do very much as she pleased, and was utterly unfettered by the so-called looking after of a chaperon, she passed a considerable part of the day in the society of the man she loved. Jack would generally come for afternoon tea or sooner, and then, accompanying her into Plymouth, pass an hour or so with her in that Paradise for idlers.

Many an hour did this couple spend on the Hoe, on the very ground where Drake and Hawkins were playing their game of bowls when the news of the advent of the Spanish Armada was brought to them.

Apart from the fact that, on a fine afternoon, one was sure to see on the Hoe all friends and acquaintances not already met in a preliminary turn up and down George Street, this grassy promenade, overlooking the sea as it does from a considerable height, has a charm all its own, quite different to the usual style of parade at a sea-side place.

The sea from the Hoe seems to have a deeper blue than from elsewhere, and the breeze, never boisterous, feels there fresher and purer. The men-of-war coming in or out, and either working their way past the little fortified islet, known as Drake's Island, into Hamoaze, or swinging round on their anchors two miles away in the lee of the breakwater, are always present to give food for conjecture as to their names or destinations, their armament or class.

The fishing craft and yachts gliding around Mount Batten into the Catte-water are another object of amusement and speculation to the lounger; while, if only to gaze

upon the lovely green of Mount-Edgecumbe, with its fine, massive old gray house standing out in its setting of foliage, like a pearl among emeralds, it is well worth while passing an hour upon the Hoe.

However, we will not dwell longer upon the beauties and attractions, for are they not written in the hearts of all those who have experienced them? and especially if, like that lucky fellow Jack Treleaven, they have been experienced in the company of as beautiful a girl as Ada Triscott, the expression of whose lustrous eyes and sweet parted lips tells plainly enough the loving feelings of her happy heart. And now, O reader, try to discover why our hero found the Hoe so remarkably lovely upon those happy summer afternoons!

Yes, Jack was very happy—and Ada? She was drinking in drops of bliss, delighting in his presence, and loving him more and more day by day. Oh, Ada, take care! What will you do when the hour of parting comes? Do you not know that these soldiers are here to-day and gone to-morrow? Torn away, often sadly against their will, perhaps because another regiment is required in India, or, maybe, only because there are a couple of companies wanted in Cork or Tipperary. Take care, Ada, take care! You are giving yourself up too passionately and entirely, pouring out all the warm love of your nature upon this handsome, good-humoured young fellow; but what will you do should he trifle with that love and passion? Answer, if you can!

She cares not, it is indeed too late; while he likes her to love him she is satisfied. He accepts her silent adoration gracefully—perhaps he loves her too, he certainly likes being with her, and occasionally says or implies as much. At any rate, the look she sees in his bold blue eyes be-

tokens something more than mere admiration, and Ada is happy, oh! so happy, when she thinks that her hero loves her. He, a soldier, who has been everywhere and seen everything, loves her, a little Devonshire country girl—at least she thinks so, sometimes. Is she right? Ah, Ada, may you never find out to your sorrow that you are mistaken, and that this happy, free-and-easy young soldier, whom every one likes, is just simply amusing himself with you, "to keep his hand in."

In the meantime, George Triscott's ship, the *Raven*, was flying along gaily before a south-westerly breeze. But she was detained at Vigo, and having strict orders from the Admiralty as to economy in coal, was obliged to finish her voyage under canvas; so the *Raven*, although really a fast sailer, seemed positively to creep to those on board longing for home and the tender embraces of those dear to them.

It was evening, and several groups were gathered on her decks, scanning with eager eyes the Ushant light shining faintly on the starboard-bow in the gloom of the darkening twilight.

One of these groups had assembled on the forecastle, where, as is usual when blue-jackets are in a good humour, some of them had collected for a "yarn" and a song. One of the number had just finished a celebrated "fore-bitter," as songs sung before the "bits" are called in nautical parlance. "Ninety-five fathom and a clear sandy bottom," is essentially a homeward-bound song, mentioning every place of interest the sailor passes on his homeward course, Ushant, of course, being one of them. The singer had just sat down, amid tumultuous applause; the very worst singer would have been encored that night, but this was indeed one of no ordinary power; he possessed a tenor

voice of great sweetness, and as he did not neglect to drawl and dwell upon his words in the way dear to seamen, his songs were always a success. He was a fine stalwart fellow, with a black beard, deep-chested and strong-limbed, with muscles of iron. William Fox, quartermaster on board the *Raven*, was a man of about thirty-two, and, you would say, decidedly the sort of man to have on your side in a quarrel. He had had some education, and did not spring by any means from the lowest of the people, and, having a good memory, he not only did not forget what he had learned when he was a boy, but improved himself to the best of his ability, as he knocked about the world. He was devoted to George Triscott, always accompanied him as his coxswain in boat-cruising expeditions, and often in his sporting trips as well.

"Bravo, Bill!" said little Jack Stentiford, as spokesman for the rest, "we allus did like your moosical voice, but I'm jolly well blowed if this blessed sou'-west breeze don't seem to blow them notes out of your whistle ten times clearer nor usual. Why, I 'spects your Poll will hear them rolling on the wind clearer nor a telegraph wire, and be looking out of her winder to see if it isn't a bloomin' message to say you'll be in to see her soon enough for breakfast, and want some new-laid heggs and extra rashers of bacon got in a-puppus for you."

"Thank 'ee, Jack," said Fox, "I don't happen to have a Poll convenient enough to slip in to breakfast with her; but, please God, if this breeze holds, I'll eat my breakfast in dear Old England the day after to-morrow all the same, and I dare say it will be a sight better than salt junk, for I am to go up to Mr. Triscott's as soon as I get ashore."

"Ah," said Jack, "that's a deal better and more reliable than a Poll, don't you see?"

"How's that, Jack, my hearty?"

"Why, becos them bloomin' Polls is so changeable; who knows if they'd have the heggs and bacon ready for yer arter four years' absence at sea; you might find her took up with and a-feedin' of some other feller with what ought to be your pervisions, which in fac' is usually the case, I understands. But, don't yer see, a good officer and a nice gentleman like Mr. Triscott, he ain't one of that sort, and if he sez, William, heggs and bacon, he means William, heggs and bacon, *hand* sausages too!"

"Right you are, my boy. Let's give him three cheers," said William. "Three cheers for Mr. Triscott;" and three such cheers were given as must have made the distant lighthouse tremble to its foundation.

When the cheering—which had startled, but not surprised, the officers on the quarter-deck, ignorant as they were of its import—had concluded, Jack Stentiford rose.

"Gentlemen," he remarked, "I'm a-thinkin' suffin, and when yer quite ready, I'll commoonicate my commitations to yer."

"Hear, hear!" "Go on, Jack." "Spit it out." "What is it?" etc., was the cry on every side. Jack was considered a good orator by his messmates, and the prospect of a speech and the cheering had caused many more of those not on duty to assemble.

"Well, I'm a-thinkin' that this would be a very sootable hopportunity to pay the hofficers hout, for what, owing to Lieutenant Hemmings—of whom, as he's gone, and was a friend of Mr. Triscott's, I won't say nothink—we was defrauded of last Christmas Day. Now, if so be as you

remember, we was goin' to carry them once round the ship, but we was stopped. There was, sartinly, then one hofficer I shouldn't have broken my 'eart over, if he 'ad a-fallen over the side. 'Owever, we was done out of carrying Mr. Triscott anyway; and, as this is probably the last night we shall ever cruise together, we may as well do it now, and carry him twice round. It won't be inwidious if we carries the others, all on 'em, only once round, becos' why? they'll think we'd be tired."

This suggestion was carried *nem. con.* with tremendous applause.

"Now," said Jack, "we have to ax the First's permission."

"There you're wrong, Jack," said Fox; "a fellow like you should have more sense than to think of such a thing. If we ask the First Lieutenant, of course, as we're going to carry him too, he'll say no. We must ask the skipper."

"Ax the skipper? and 'oo's a-goin' to 'ave the cheek to beard him? and 'ow's it a-goin' to be done without the First a-knowin' what's up? I darn't do it, Bill!"

"I will," said William; "you see, there he is on the quarter-deck. Follow me aft, all of you, and I'll tell the First 'Luff' I want to speak to the cappen in private."

No sooner said than done. The men all proceeded aft in a body. The officers, as they saw them coming, were puzzled beyond measure to know the meaning of it, more so still when Fox asked to speak to the captain in private. Hats in hand, the men stood respectfully at a little distance, anxiously awaiting the result of the conference, which they saw the skipper had graciously accorded to their deputy.

The captain was a strict officer, but a good-natured man, and he saw no reason for preventing the blue-jackets from

showing their good feelings, in their own way, towards their officers on this the last night of their being all at sea together. On the whole, he was rather pleased than the reverse, for it showed that this had been a happy ship. He laughingly gave the desired permission, bargaining that they were to wait until he went below, before commencing operations.

They had not long to wait; for, after exchanging a few words on indifferent subjects with one of the officers, he went below.

In a moment, almost before his hat had disappeared down the hatchway, that respectfully waiting throng had changed apparently to a troop of howling devils; at least, so they seemed for a moment to the astonished officers, nearly all of whom were on deck. With a rush and a wild "hooroosh," they swarmed upon the quarter-deck. It was a race for who should be first, for most of them wanted to have a hand in the hoisting of George Triscott. However, William Fox, who had kept his foremost place, was the first to bear down upon him, while the late orator, and originator of the scheme, had him by the legs in a second. Half-a-dozen more seized him by any available part of his body, and before he had time to struggle he found himself high in the air above their heads. The same scene was enacted all round, while a party descended and brought up the vainly struggling officers who had been below. Order was at an end; and the officers for once had to obey the men. Round the ship they went "hurrahing" themselves hoarse. One circuit concluded, they were liberated from their gentle nurses' arms; all except Triscott, who had to undergo another round to the tune of "He's a jolly good fellow." By the captain's orders every man then got a glass of grog, and thus passed the last evening on board the *Raven*.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER.

FOR a week or so after George's return home, Ada did not see much of Jack Treleaven. He called and made the acquaintance of the sailor, but, wisely thinking that Ada and her uncle would like to have the latter alone to themselves just at first, he kept away for some time after that. Not so Captain Hemmings; he was a more frequent visitor at Tamar Terrace than ever, ostensibly coming to see his old messmate, and at the same time spending many a pleasant hour in Ada's society. Jack and "Bung" at this period passed a great deal of their time out at Horrabridge. Lifton, though a quiet sort of man, was a clever fellow in his way. He was a good amateur artist, and as such had many tastes in common with the Watson girls.

One day about the beginning of September, they found themselves as usual out at Horrabridge. Jack soon left them, to walk over to Denham Bridge for an hour or two on the river, leaving Lifton to accompany the young ladies in their walk on the moor. They had reached a commanding spot near Walkhampton Church, which stands alone on a hill directly overlooking the narrow valley of the little River Walkham, with its rocky sides, and indirectly giving a much more extensive view over Dartmoor and Roborough Down.

"Stop, Miss Watson, and look," said Lifton. "This is, I think, one of the finest views in the country; but how the bracken has changed colour since I was out here last! What lovely tints of red and orange, changing into the deep purply gloom of the valley where the shadow falls! What a beautiful study it makes! but one so far above me that I would never dare to attempt it. How happy you must be to live in such a spot! I should think you never have time for anything but to admire the view."

"Indeed, Captain Lifton, I think you underrate your powers," said Nellie. "What I have seen of your painting makes me think you are just the man who would do justice to that view. Your sketches are so nice in detail. Where I should miss the shadow of a rock or of a projecting bush, that would be the very thing you would give your most delicate touches to. What a capital husband you would be! One would have only to paint the outlines, and then send you to finish the picture. It's very unfortunate that my young affections are engaged, and that there is no chance for me in that line."

As Nellie said this, she elevated her eyebrows and made a coquettish little "moue," as if she might really have meant what she said; and Lifton, who was always slightly nervous at any approach to the idea of matrimony, looked a little frightened as he answered, evidently anxious to shift the responsibility at once on to somebody else's shoulders:

"Oh, indeed; and who's the happy man who will have the honour of finishing up your pictures for you? Not that I fancy you would let anybody within a mile of you before you had yourself finished or spoilt one."

"Why, really, Captain Lifton, you must be very dense if you have not observed that I am pining for Damon.

Yes," as he looked incredulous, "I am even content to be third after Miss Triscott and that horrid little 'Maid of the Mill,' who I feel convinced is the only fish he will catch this afternoon. But alas for my pictures! the only art he understands is the art of gastronomy; still that's a good deal in these degenerate days."

"Why, yes, I dare say that is a good deal; but I imagine you would require something more in a husband? Constancy, for example, is a good thing, and apparently you don't credit Jack with much of that quality. But why do you harp so incessantly on that girl at the mill? What on earth can she have to do with Jack? I don't see how, if he is catching fish, he can have time to see much of her."

"Bless you, you dear simple man," cried Nellie, sarcastically; and then, after a little pause, "Well, I will own it is very unbecoming of me to pretend to notice these things; but I haven't lived all my life with my eyes shut, and I know what you soldiers are. You go on in the most outrageous way with every pretty girl you meet—I don't mean you personally, I think you're too shy—but most of you do, and Jack Treleaven would, I'm sure; then he is so good-looking that a little flirt like Laura Luscombe would soon have her head turned by his pretty speeches. I believe her to be a designing little thing too, for all her sweet looks." Nellie lowered her voice and looked very serious, as she went on: "You know, Captain Lifton, it is because I really want you to put Jack Treleaven on his guard that I speak to you now about what perhaps I had better not mention; personally I should always stick up for Jack, whether I knew him to be right or wrong, because I like him and always have liked him very much, but others will not do the same, and

people round here have long tongues and are not more good-natured or less inclined to invent and embellish gossiping stories than in other places. However," drawing a long breath, "it's off my conscience now; you may put all I have said down to jealousy if you like, I don't care, so long as you only act upon it. Shall we change the subject?"

"Is she spoony on Jack or not?" was the thought that flashed through Lifton's mind as Nellie concluded her tirade; "but whether she be or no there is plenty of sense in what she says," so he answered at once: "I'm afraid, Miss Watson, I have not much influence with him; but if you really think there is anything between him and that young woman at the mill, I'll try to get him to drop her. Yes, let's change the subject. Have you seen Miss Triscott's brother since he returned—he is an old friend of yours, I believe?"

"Say rather a friend of Mollie's. Mollie!" calling out to her sister, who was quietly sketching on a rock close by, "Mollie, you know George Triscott, don't you?"

The only reply was a heap of turf and heather which, intended for Nellie, smote Lifton heavily on the back of the neck. After the merriment caused by this mishap, which brought them all to their legs, they strolled in the direction of home, where they arrived in about an hour, to find George Triscott himself awaiting them.

"Talk of a certain person," said Nellie, "and his tail comes round the corner. Well, George, here's Mollie been doing nothing but talk about you all the afternoon;" at which sally they all laughed merrily except Lifton, who became silent and rather glum for the rest of the evening.

They were joined at high tea by Jack Treleaven, who appeared, as Nellie had prophesied, without a single fish, giving

the usual excuses of too much sun or too little wind, or both or neither, but to the surprise of both Jack and "Bung" she did not indulge in one word of chaff on the subject, although as boisterous as usual on other topics.

The three men went home together by train to Devonport. It was a quiet journey, as each of the trio had enough to occupy himself in his own thoughts.

Some days after this, Hemmings and Treleaven were going out fishing together. Although so different in every way, they were good friends enough, and had one bond of union between them in their mutual love of fishing. They had been walking silently along for some moments, when said Hemmings, apparently resuming a conversation that they had been carrying on before:

"Well, Treleaven, I believe you, and I'll take your bet —a sovereign, is it? Now, to show that she really has nothing to do with your fishing so often, you're to kill more fish than I do in a week, and that without coming within a mile of the mill. I warn you, though, that, if I meet her going up to you with luncheon, as I have been confidently assured she frequently does, I shall consider you have lost. However, I suppose you will write her a note and tell her she is not to have the pleasure of your company for seven long days. Dear me, I pity you!"

"I'm sure I shall do nothing of the sort," said Jack, testily; "and, to show you how little I care about her, I will make the bet for a fortnight instead of a week, if you like. She's a pretty little thing, superior to most girls in her class. I like to stop and chaff with her for a few minutes now and then, nothing more, and I don't see that *that* hurts any one;" and Jack looked rather haughty.

"Ah!" persisted Hemmings, "I am glad to hear she is

not so very captivating after all, as I suppose I shall see her every day down there. A fortnight, then, and what do you say if we double the money? You see, I feel sure you have overrated your powers of resisting such sweet loveliness. I expect I shall find you coming at the end of the week to tell me that you wish to pay your bet at once, as there isn't a fish in the river. Ha, ha, ha! We shall soon see if she isn't worth more than two pounds to you."

"Let those laugh who win," said Jack; "you're an ass to want to double the money. I consider it as good as in my pocket already. It is like betting on a certainty."

"I don't much care if it is a certainty," said Hemmings to himself. "I don't see why Treleaven should monopolise every pretty woman in the place I take an interest in. Little witch! She declares she doesn't care a bit about him, and hardly ever sees him. 'All men are liars,' and all women too; I would not trust either of them farther than I can see them. At any rate, I suppose he'll leave the coast clear for a bit now."

The pair of fishermen now separated to walk to their respective parts of the river which lay across the Down in different directions. We will follow Hemmings, and see how his fishing gets on. He had not been at work for more than half an hour on a lovely part of the Tavy, where it runs through a wood, sloping down a steep incline on each bank. Suddenly there was a splash right in front of him, and in the region of his flies. Although it was hardly like the rise of a fish, unless that of a very large one, the angler struck heavily on seeing it, and struck all the harder that he was somewhat surprised at its suddenness. His line, however, meeting with no resistance, the only result was that he landed his cast of flies into a bush on the bank, well above

his head, for he was wading the stream. This necessitated his getting out of the water, a matter of some difficulty in waterproof waders, as the bank was very steep, and about ten minutes or a quarter of an hour's delay in disentangling the cast from the bush, and the flies from each other, for the gut cast had tied itself up into one of those abominable tangles, the misery of undoing which none but an angler can appreciate. Captain Hemmings accompanied the whole operation with muttered nautical expletives against the fish, the bush, and the flies.

When all was clear, he made a fresh cast over the big fish that had missed his fly, as he thought, the first time. When, lo! another tremendous rise! This was so evidently caused by a stone, that Hemmings turned round angrily, with a very naughty word on his lips. But his anger turned into a laugh, though rather a laugh of vexation, as he saw peering out from behind a tree a pretty little red bonnet, and a very pretty face beneath it, while he was greeted with a merry laugh and "Good afternoon, Captain Hemmings. Didn't you rise a regular whale just now? The noise he made quite frightened me."

"Confound you! you little monkey. I had no idea that it was you that was making such a fool of me, and you have been calmly watching me undoing your handiwork, and never even offered to help me. I'll pay you off when I get out."

He had scrambled up the bank and was standing beside her.

"Now then, young lady, you must give me a kiss."

But Laura Luscombe—for of course it was she—looked frightened, and said, hiding her face in her hands:

"Oh! no, no! Captain Hemmings, please don't! I couldn't indeed—don't ask me."

He took his arm from round her waist as she spoke, but the look of sinister determination in his face was not pleasant to see. Laura was in appearance no countrified girl; like all Devonshire girls of her class, she had the knack of dressing herself well and neatly, and many a lady would have looked less ladylike than did the miller's daughter at this moment.

She recovered herself quickly, and, looking archly up at the sailor, said:

"Now, Captain Hemmings, you must forgive me."

"Well! come and sit down here, and I'll tell you all about that presently. It's too hot to go on fishing. I suppose you were strolling up to see Mr. Treleaven? but he isn't fishing down here to-day."

"What nonsense!" replied Laura. "You know I don't care about Mr. Treleaven when you're here. He's well enough to talk to when you're away, and to make life more bearable in this slow old place."

"I'm afraid you are a horrid little flirt, Laura! I'll forgive you this once though, as you look so pretty this afternoon."

She felt pleased, and, looking up blushingly at her companion, said:

"I'm so glad you think I look nice; and you know it isn't on Mr. Treleaven's account, or that of any of the other gentlemen whom I meet up at father's place, when they come here fishing, that I wish to do so, don't you? Am I as pretty as Miss Triscott? Horrid thing! I hate her!" and a very black look came over Miss Luscombe's lovely, but, at this moment, determined little face.

"Why do you ask me, and not Mr. Treleaven?" said Hemmings; "and why should you hate that young lady

and abuse her when you know her to be a friend of mine?"

"I ask you because William Fox, who is a very old friend of ours, and who was out to see father the other day, told us he believed you were engaged to be married to her; now perhaps you can guess why I hate her?"

"Confound that man Fox!" said Hemmings, angrily. "I never liked him; he was always shoving in his oar when he was not wanted. Why can't he mind his own business?"

"It's no use your abusing William Fox," said Laura, "for I may as well tell you at once, I think him a very good fellow. It would have been far better for me, had I married him before he went to sea last time. He wanted me to do so, and, although he is only a blue-jacket, he is well-born, and would, had I married him, have taken pains to get on, and now probably have been a warrant officer. But I was too much of a lady—and now, what good has it done me, or is it likely to do him?" said she, sorrowfully. "I am only discontented and always wishing I was, what I can never be—a lady. It is true, you tell me, and I know myself I have the perceptions and feelings of one—that's all the good that comes of going to a superior school and being educated above your station. Now, when I meet that proud Miss Watson, who looks at me so superciliously if she sees me speaking to a gentleman, I often feel I have as good a right to be in their society as she has, and better. I'm sure I have not her loud, boisterous ways. Because she was born a lady, people call her vulgarities eccentricities; whereas, if I spoke and acted so, they would only be called by their proper name. It makes me angry too that, if she came down the slope now, while I am talking to you, you would be anxious to move away from me and pretend it was

only an accidental meeting; and if it was Miss Triscott who was to appear, you would positively fly. Oh, Richard, it is very, very hard!" and the poor little girl began to sob bitterly. "It is no wonder" (sob) "that I take every opportunity of being seen with Mr. Treleaven" (sob) "or any other gentleman on purpose to" (sob) "spite them for despising me" (sob), "a poor, wretched girl with feelings as keen as any of them."

Poor Laura! she was fairly overcome. She was, as she had said, a well-brought-up and an educated girl, and one of extreme sensitiveness, and it was indeed sometimes very hard for her. It would have been far better for her had she been left in her own sphere, and not sent by her father to one of those expensive schools where so many good girls of her class have been spoiled. Ay, and it would have been better for her now to be lying cold in her grave than sitting as she is, with her head on Richard Hemmings' shoulder, while he passionately kisses away the tears that are coursing down her burning cheeks.

And so occupied, we must leave them for the present.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PICNIC AND A PROPOSAL.

BOUT this time the Triscotts talked of going for their long-deferred visit to North Devon. Before going, however, they determined to give a large picnic, as a source of pleasure to themselves and their numerous friends in the "three towns," and also as a good way for William Triscott to pay off all the civilities his niece had received during the summer months. It would save him, too, the racket of a dance which had, at first, been proposed by George, but rejected because the house was not half big enough to hold all those who should be asked. This forthcoming picnic was the talk of the place. It was to be the picnic of the year, and William Triscott himself, as well as his nephew and niece, were determined to make it a success.

The morning broke bright and sunny, and when the different parties arrived at Shaugh Bridge, in the Bickleigh Vale, the lovely scenery round that well-known spot was looking at its best. Situated below the juncture of the two streams Cad and Meavy, which united form the River Plym, there can no better spot be found for a picnic. A nice, grassy glade under fine old oaks on the river's brink was chosen as the place for the repast, which, it is needless to state, was of the most excellent and lavish description, for

William Triscott was not the man to do things by halves. The champagne was therefore of the best, the ice sufficient, the solids abundant and dainty, and the fruit fresh and delicious.

Some people seem to think that a necessary part of the fun of a picnic is the being obliged to use the same plate for every description of food, and of having to share a knife and fork with some one else. Generally it will, however, be found that this implies a certain amount of discomfort for everybody. No sane person can possibly imagine that raspberry-tart tastes the better for being flavoured with pâté de foie gras, and great indeed must the friend be with whom one would care to share knife and fork if others were available. On this occasion, we are happy to be able to chronicle, everything was available, therefore those—and let us hope they were few—who care for the species of fun aforesaid were mostly disappointed. Not all, however; for there was one of the last-joined subalterns of the Royal Marines observed seated under a bush "apart," eating very gravely off the corner of the plate of a goddess about double his own age and weight.

He was afraid to speak to her, but he was pleased with her condescension, and was happy. She was happy too, for it was evident that her reign of conquest was not yet over; and, since they were both pleased, why need any one else complain? Nay, rather let us envy them their solitary plate and their united happiness!

After the feast, which was not solely one of reason, and the flow of a good deal besides soul, the party divided, and, in groups or pairs, wandered off in different directions. There was every description of ground to ramble over: moorland, wood, hill, mountain, or the rocky sides of the stream.

The elder members of the party did not go far, for it was not a day for strict chaperonage, and they preferred to stay near the adjacent cottage, where tea was to be served in a couple of hours' time. They were the more wise in this, as some rather ominous-looking clouds were beginning to collect—greater age, it is to be concluded in this instance, brought greater wisdom. But the clouds did not prevent any of the officers of both services, or the young ladies, from starting at once whither they listed; for in Devonshire every one is prepared for rain at the most likely and unlikely times. Talk about rain in Ireland! For a good "rainy season," where you will find more showers in a week than other places can produce in a month, go to Plymouth!

Some members of the party settled to visit the "Dewah Stone," which crowns a steep, rocky hill at the base of which runs the river, and from whence the best view of the surrounding country is to be obtained. To visit this eminence, it is necessary to cross the River Cad at its juncture with the Meavy.

All started together, and much fun was caused by the manœuvring required to cross the stepping-stones, which feat was at length accomplished by the greater number. Once across the stream, those who had contrived to get wet feet, found it absolutely necessary to walk much quicker in order to dry them. As there are endless roads, through the bushes, briars, and rocks, which are supposed to lead to the Dewah Stone, and as each one chose a different route, soon of all those who had crossed the river scarcely more than two were left together. There was, however, one group of three; for, although Captain Hemmings had attached himself to Ada, she had asked her brother to stay with them,

and was determined that they three should actually accomplish the ascent.

George did not know his sister's reason for asking him to come with her and Hemmings, but, Mollie Watson having disappeared with some one else, he felt too lazy this hot afternoon to commence a fresh flirtation with any of the young ladies not already provided with partners, and saying to himself: "Well, I suppose Ada knows what she is about, and would not have asked me if she had not wanted me," he joined her and Hemmings, and they started. What the gallant commander thought of the arrangement remains a secret; for he made no remark, and his face was a perfect mask.

Among the first to cross the stepping-stones were Nellie Watson and Jack Treleaven. Nellie was looking at her very best to-day; in the highest spirits and apparently thoroughly pleased with herself, Jack, and every one else. Her cheeks were fresh as her own moorland air, and her bright brown eyes, sparkling and roving over everything and everybody, did not lose the very smallest detail, either ludicrous or sentimental; from the youthful marine casting "sheep's eyes" at his elderly inamorata, to the fat major who had surrounded himself, in a nice shady spot, with every comfort, ostensibly for the delectation of the slim, frightened little girl at his side, whom he will mystify by-and-by with one or two of his highly flavoured old Indian stories! Never a great stickler for *les convenances*, Nellie had been the moving spirit to start the rambling after lunch; saying to Jack, "Let us give the young people a chance, Mrs. Grundy has always been my natural enemy, and I never feel so exhilarated as when I know I am giving her a sell. Now, Jack, you don't think, do you, that any

chaperon would ever be tough enough to want to cross those stepping-stones, and take that walk afterwards?"

Jack having reassured her as well as he could upon this point, they set off together.

Although Ada knew of the sort of platonic friendship between Jack and Nellie, it was not without a little twinge of jealousy that she watched that volatile young lady and the man she loved disappear among the trees at the other side of the river. She would not perhaps have minded had it been at any other time, and if Nellie had not been looking so very well; but to-day, her last day before leaving for a time, she thought he *might* have come to walk with her.

Poor Ada! she had not half the knowledge of mankind her older friend Miss Watson had; she was far too confiding and soft-hearted. She could hear them laughing merrily after she had lost sight of them, and it was evident they intended enjoying themselves to the uttermost this pleasant afternoon. Ada and her companions went steadily on towards the summit, but they had not got more than half-way up when it began to rain. As she had an umbrella, and the rain was not very heavy, she continued to climb, but Hemmings full of gallantry, and perhaps tired of being *à trois*, said he would return for her waterproof and meet her as she came down. So George and his sister went on alone, in spite of the rain which came down heavier and more rapidly every minute. He, sailor-like, had come prepared for all emergencies, and when they alone, of all those who had started with a similar intention, had reached the summit, he wrapped himself and his sister in his large waterproof, and for a while they waited hoping for an improvement in the weather.

Let us see now how the others fared. They had nearly all hurried back when the rain commenced, and recrossed the stepping-stones; and well for them that they did so, for the water in the Cad was rising, the rain having been much heavier higher on the moor. Once back at Shaugh Bridge, there was plenty of shelter in the cottage and elsewhere. Jack and Nellie were not among those who returned. At first they continued to struggle upwards, but, having hit upon one of the most circuitous paths, they did not seem to make much progress towards the Dewah Stone, and, the rain getting worse, they resolved to return; but by the time they reached the stream they found they had delayed too long, for the water was rushing fast over the stepping-stones. There was a little clam or wooden foot-bridge close by, but the door on that they found locked. There was nothing for it but to remain as they were on the far side of the stream.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish," said Nellie, helplessly shaking the little door. "Shall we have to stay here all night, I wonder? Oh, dear! oh, dear! think of the nice hot tea they are all having at the cottage now. Jack, can't you suggest something?" But Jack could only gaze hopelessly at the muddy stream, whirling and eddying higher every moment over the stepping-stones, and beg of Nellie to stand closer under the small umbrella, which was beginning to make dirty little streams down her smart blue dress. "If this goes on much longer I shall cry, I know I shall; there is a limit to human endurance." She went on: "Hurrah, I have it! How very stupid of me not to think of it before;" for her knowledge of the locality had suddenly come to her assistance, and she remembered a sort of little cave or hollow in the rocks, quite close to where they were standing, in which she and her playfellows had been

wont to make fires as children. They hurried to the place; a large tree stood just before the entrance, effectually hiding it from those who were not aware of its existence. Once in this dry retreat, the pair recovered their spirits, and became quite cheerful again. There was just room for both to sit down, and they could hear the rain pattering on the leaves of the large oak that guarded the entrance. While themselves dry and comfortable, they wondered if any of the rest of the party were still out in the wet; if so, they were probably getting but small shelter under trees or bushes. And this thought—such is human nature—made them feel so comfortable in their snug little retreat that they waxed more chatty and confidential than ever. Jack felt an occasional qualm when he thought of the rising river and of Ada, to whom he had intended devoting himself for the rest of the evening, and he did once propose making an attempt to ford the stream, but Nellie stoutly refused to "risk her life," as she said, by being carried across, so he had to dismiss all thoughts of getting back for the present.

In the meantime, George and Ada, tired of being rained upon at the top of the hill, commenced their descent; Hemmings did not turn up with the waterproof at the spot agreed upon; they therefore went on, as Ada and Jack had done, only to find the stream impassable. The rain was still descending in torrents, and they retraced their steps to try to find some kind of shelter. As luck would have it, they came across the large oak which hid the mouth of the grotto where Jack Treleaven and Miss Watson were seated. The noise of the rain on the leaves prevented the occupants from hearing them approach, and the first idea they had themselves that there was any one within half a mile of them was the sound of voices. They could distinctly hear the

tones of the speaker, and at the first word Ada laid her hand upon her brother's arm to impress silence.

Jack was speaking in impassioned tones, and as follows:

"Dearest Nellie, I have loved you for months past without daring to breathe a syllable of it. If the devotion of a lifetime is worthy to be laid at your feet, accept it from me, and become my wife."

Ada did not wait to hear another word, but clutching her brother by the arm dragged him away. He looked in astonishment at her face, white more with passion than grief, and was about to ask her what had happened; but, turning her ashy face to him, she implored him not to ask her anything now. And she hurried him on towards the river.

The rain was stopping, and bright blue patches appeared between the ragged clouds. The man who kept the key of the "clam," guessing that the river would be swollen, had arrived upon the scene, and all the party were soon safe back at the cottage where tea was ready; Jack and Nellie being the last to get back. Ada kept up a gay appearance, helping to pour out tea, and doing the honours as hostess, talking to every one, and making George look after the chaperons; but inwardly her heart was raging tempestuously. She managed skilfully to avoid Jack and Nellie until quite the end of the evening, when the former at last found her sitting alone in a window-seat, and took the vacant place beside her. The blood rushed to her pale cheeks as he asked, in the old, lowered tones, "If she was tired, and if the day had not been rather long for her?" But she steadied her voice with an effort, and replied, drily:

"No, it had not been too long, and she had enjoyed it."

But when he asked her if he might come and see her once again before her departure, she said, in a hard, constrained voice:

"No, I shall not have time to see you, and I should prefer your not calling;" and getting up she walked into the next room, where George was struggling to force a stout matron into an ulster which evidently did not belong to her.

Utterly at a loss to understand this very sudden change in one whom he had believed to be entirely devoted to him, Jack retired, much discomfited and crest-fallen, to ask the advice of his friend "Bung." That wise man, not knowing all the circumstances of the case, was quite unable to offer any of a satisfactory kind, and Jack turned from him in disgust.

Nellie Watson also, when she came to say good-bye, and thank her for a pleasant day, was surprised at the coldness of her manner. She put it down to her friend's being quite tired out, and perhaps out of temper at the rain having come to spoil the otherwise successful picnic.

No words can describe Ada's misery for the next few days, but she was too proud to shut herself up, and weep over Jack's heartless conduct.

"No," she said to herself, "he is not worth a second thought;" and she indulged in an amount of flirtation with Captain Hemmings during those days that quite astonished him. Still Hemmings was not deceived altogether by this forced hilarity, for he had not been all over the world, seeing people and places of every sort and kind, without gaining a considerable knowledge of the human mind. Hemmings also, although a good-looking fellow and a man rather inclined to an overbearing manner to those of his

own sex, was not without a certain amount of modesty with ladies; he was not inclined to overrate his own powers of captivation, and was far too cautious to make a false move where he might meet with repulse from being over-precipitate. He therefore remained courteous and friendly with Ada, but was not *empressé* enough in his manner to excite remark.

George had never questioned his sister, but he had sufficient penetration to find out her secret. He was angry at what he considered Treleaven's deception, and, when next he met him, gave him a cool nod and passed on. Nevertheless, such is the contradictoriness of the feminine nature that when George had made some sneering remarks about him afterwards, Ada turned upon her brother furiously, and would not hear a word against her defaulting lover.

Notwithstanding Ada's having desired him, on the evening of the picnic, not to call again at Tamar Terrace, Jack resolved to see her before she left, and have some kind of explanation. Imagine his mortification, then, although he had seen the top of her head by the window where she usually sat to read or work, when the servant simply said, in reply to his inquiry, those three cabalistic words, "Not at home," which have rung the death-knell to many an aspiring lover's heart. The pleasure of his feelings was not increased by the fact that he could distinctly hear the tones of Hemmings' voice, as he turned angrily away, more perplexed than ever by this last discomfiture.

There was another person who could not understand the turn events had taken, and this was Mr. Triscott. Liking Jack as he did, he regretted the coolness which had taken place between his nephew and niece and the young

soldier. He had wished Ada to ask the latter to dinner, but she had, to his astonishment, refused to do so. Noticing her flaming cheeks and confused manner, he said:

"Why, Ada, my child, what's the matter? Have you and Treleaven been having a tiff? There's nothing serious, I hope, for I like the lad."

But, getting no answer, he went away, softly whistling to himself, and wondering vaguely what had occurred. Ada, now that she had of her own free will given up this last chance of seeing Jack, went, as soon as Hemmings was gone, to her own room and burst into a flood of tears. As she sat there weeping, she heard the bugle sound of the "dress" for mess over in the barracks. This only made matters worse, for well she remembered how full many a time that bugle sound had been but a prelude to his step upon the stair, and his cheery voice in the drawing-room. She thought of his manly form and bright smiling face as they had often appeared to her on such occasions; and now it was all over—he was another's. Had she not herself heard him ask that other to be his wife in terms of fondest affection? This too he had done knowing full well how dearly she herself had loved him.

"Oh, Jack, Jack," she cried, in her anguish, "how could you be so cruel? What have I done to deserve it?" and the tears that flowed so freely, brought no relief, no hope.

Everything, henceforth, was to be a blank. She felt, if only he would return to her, how gladly she would forgive him. She had taken out his photograph intending to tear it up, but found herself gazing fondly and wistfully upon it. A thousand wild ideas came into her head; she thought she would write and reproach him for his perfidy, or else perhaps ask him to come and see her once more; but both, she

quickly felt, were equally impossible, equally incompatible with her maidenly dignity. She was very weak and she knew it, but she was incapable of lowering herself by making any advances of this sort.

Gentle reader, pity, do not condemn her for her momentary weakness! Remember she had lost her first love, whom she had loved with all the strength and idolatry of her warm, trusting heart, and in one summer's day her idol had fallen with a crash and been shattered.

CHAPTER IX.

CHUMS AND SKETCHES.

TIME ran on, and the Triscotts left Tamar Terrace. Ada had not again seen Jack except once in the distance, and she departed to North Devon sick at heart, and endlessly reproaching herself with not having given Jack a last opportunity of explaining his strange behaviour, or at least of bidding her farewell. So, to the moment that the train started out of the station, she had clung to the hope that she might perhaps meet him accidentally, and, had she done so, had fully determined on having an explanation of some kind.

On the day of her departure she had taken particular care to be early at the railway-station, for, somehow, she had a kind of hope that Jack might be there once more to endeavour to bid her good-bye. As she had told Captain Lifton only the day previously of the train they were to go by, she knew Jack must have learned it from him. Her hopes were, however, as she knew they must be, fruitless; and she entered the train more unhappy and despairing than before.

Could she have seen the delinquent at that moment she might not have been so entirely heart-broken and wretched. He was standing in the window of Lifton's quarters with

his eye to a telescope, watching the station for the smoke of the train that was to bear her away. Presently it was seen issuing in white puffs which he followed intently, until it entered the North Road Station, whence it re-issued, after the lapse of a minute, and was lost to sight again almost immediately. He turned from the window, shutting up the glass with a bang, which called forth the following remonstrance from his friend:

"I say, old fellow, I don't see that, because you have been making an ass of yourself, and won't have quite as many opportunities of doing so for the next month, you need on that account break my glass. It's ungrateful, too, when you've been able to see the smoke so nicely through it!"

"D——n the smoke and you too, you Job's comforter!" said Jack, fiercely, leaving the room, and banging the door after him.

And perhaps it was as well for him that he did leave the room after this little ebullition of temper, for he had just done one of the few things calculated to make his chum lose his. To treat his telescope like that! *His* telescope, the best, of course, that ever was made, and from which he was as inseparable as a sailor. This was, indeed, wounding "Bung" in his tenderest feelings. He bounded across the room after it, for once really angry. Luckily, however, the precious spy-glass, after having struck the wall, had fallen on the bed, and was discovered, after half an hour's unscrewing of joints and rubbing of lenses, to be entirely free from injury.

By this time "Bung" also had recovered his equanimity, and, soliloquising, acknowledged to himself that it was rather rough on Jack "to have made that remark about the smoke;" but, he added to himself:

"It is none the less true that Jack is an ass, and ought to be contented with one girl at a time, instead of getting himself into difficulties with two or three, as I always told him. I should like to know, though, what really is up between him and the fair Ada. It's all nonsense his pretending not to know what he has done to annoy her. But it's no business of mine, and I won't worry the old chappie with questions until he likes to tell me all about it. Still, he wouldn't be my 'chum' if I didn't think of him and his scrapes a little, and, if I don't know what's the matter, how can I help him? I wonder if he's been proposing to both girls at once, and if they've told each other?"

This idea appeared to the discreet captain as so utterly ludicrous that, laughing silently behind his pipe, he swallowed a puff of smoke which nearly choked him. He had just recovered from this accident when Jack returned, looking very contrite, and saying he "hoped the telescope was not damaged." A shake of the hand, and all was as usual between these two; for, whether a quarrel be a little or a big one, it is always far easier made up between two men than between two persons of the opposite sex. In the latter case, there is frequently so much preparatory parleying required before my lady chooses to show signs of an inclination to be mollified, that very likely the whole thing commences all over again.

Jack sat down looking subdued and gloomy, and took refuge in a pipe also, and the pair of them, having apparently nothing to say to each other, puffed away for some time in silence, each occupied with his own thoughts.

"Bung's" countenance, though still rather inflamed from his recent choking fit, had now assumed a sympathetic expression, which, whether indicating his true feelings or

not, helped somewhat to soothe Jack's perturbed spirits. Presently Lifton broke the silence by asking:

"What are you going to do this afternoon, Jack—Horrabridge?"

"Yes, I suppose so," gloomily, from Jack.

"Fishing?"

"No—water too low."

"Watsons'?"

Jack nodded gloomily over his pipe.

"I'll come with you, then, if you'll get out of uniform at once; we can catch the next train, as Miss Watson promised to show me a lovely view for a sketch from the Sheep Tor, and I think we might have time to reach it to-day if we start at once. The walk will do you good, old man, in your present depressed condition. If any one can cheer you up, I'm sure it's your friend Miss Watson. It's hardly worth while my reminding you that, 'Quand on n'a pas ce qu'on aime, il faut aimer ce qu'on a;' indeed, she may be the real object of your adoration, for anything I know to the contrary. But of one thing I am convinced, and that is, that if any one can rouse your drooping spirits, Miss Watson will, or else you'll have a battle royal, which will answer the purpose quite as well; so hurry up, 'old sonny,' if you're going 'up along.'"

"I believe you're right," said Jack. "Nellie is a dear, good girl, and can never be valued too highly, in spite of her whimsicalities. I do think a downright good row with her would do me good to-day, and I should not wonder if we had it, too;" and, laughing for the first time that morning, Jack hastened to his quarters to dress, calling out to "Bung," "not to forget the telescope for the view from Sheep Tor." Although this was meant in chaff, the hint

was taken in earnest, and, when they started, the precious instrument, which had so narrowly escaped destruction, was under Lifton's arm.

Arrived at Moor Lodge, they found both young ladies hard at work painting. Mollie, neat and smiling as usual, welcomed them heartily, but Nellie continued working vigorously at her easel, pretending not to have heard them come into the room. She raised her head at last, and held out her hand first to one and then to the other, saying tragically, as she did so: "You've done it, I knew you would!"

"Done what?" said Jack, alarmed.

"Done what, indeed! Why, you have just dashed all my budding hopes of fame to the ground by coming into the room—without even coughing at the door—exactly at the wrong moment; just when I had an inspiration, and had commenced a work which would very likely have made my name famous."

Lifton, never quite understanding her moods, or when she was in earnest, began to apologise. However, as she did not seem to notice him, but kept on frowning heavily at Jack, he crept quietly into the background with Mollie.

"Oh, is that all?" said Jack, relieved, for he really thought for a moment that he had indeed been "putting his foot into it." "Well, let me see this work of genius; and if you like I'll order creaks in my boots before I come to see you again, so that you can hear me half a mile off."

But Nellie was not to be pacified, she was evidently in a quarrelsome humour, and when this topic was exhausted, they began afresh upon another. Mollie and "Bung" from the corner where they sat could not help hearing a little of the fray, and they exchanged meaning glances when Ada

Triscott's name was mentioned, and when subsequently they heard Nellie tell Jack in angry accents that "he ought to be ashamed of himself."

A moment afterwards she bounced off her chair, cast a look of withering scorn at Jack, and saying, "I don't intend to stir from the house to-day," walked out of the room, shutting—not to say banging—the door after her.

Jack gave a long whistle. Lifton looked perplexed, and Mollie amused, and a rather awkward silence ensued, which Lifton was the first to break.

"I am sorry, Miss Watson," said he, "that we should have chosen such an unfortunate day for our visit. I think we had better be off. We can either find our way to Sheep Tor alone, and take advantage of this fine day for the view; or," turning to Jack, "if you prefer it we can go back to Plymouth by the next train."

"Pray don't do that, Captain Lifton. I see you don't half understand my sister; she will be back in a moment, I dare say, and then we can arrange about the walk, if not I shall go and look for her."

"I hope you will do nothing of the kind," said Jack, haughtily; "in Miss Watson's unenviable frame of mind, I don't think she would be a very pleasant companion. If you would like to go, let's go without her; I've had enough of her temper for one day."

"Oh! you have, have you?" and though scarcely two minutes had elapsed, Nellie herself entered fully attired for walking. "Now, how long are you people going to keep me waiting, I should like to know? Aren't we going to Sheep Tor? Come, Jack, no sulks! I forgive you for having attacked me in such unmeasured terms—you all heard him, didn't you? It's no use his denying it. I've ordered

the sandwiches, and they'll be ready by the time you have your hat on, Molly; so make haste."

"Trust Nellie to look after the grub," said Mollie as she departed, leaving "Bung" and Jack to answer her sister's voluble questions, or not, as they pleased, and not in the least surprised at her sister's sudden change of mood. When she returned she found the three the best possible friends, criticising Nellie's picture which had been the original cause of their quarrel.

Harmony thus thoroughly restored, they started to drive as far as they could up the wooded valley of the Meavy, and to walk the rest of the way. When they had driven as far as possible, Mollie proposed that the provisions "be disposed of at once for fear Nellie should forget all about them!" and so after a little rough picnic the four set off across the moor, the river being no obstacle to-day as it had been the day of the picnic; the weather having been dry and warm now for some days.

Jack carried Nellie's sketch-book, and he and she walked briskly on in front, while Lifton and Mollie trudged along behind with many a good-natured, merry laugh from the latter as she stumbled over the rocks and roots concealed in the long heather.

Both girls looked particularly nice as they reached the summit of Sheep's Tor, as Devonians frequently call it. Nothing improves the personal appearance of young ladies, with any pretensions to good looks, so much as a climb. The exertion of the scramble heightens a good colour, or gives one where it is wanting, the eyes seem to shine with greater brilliancy, every contour of a pretty figure is shown off to the best advantage, a neat little bit of red stocking calling attention perhaps to a still neater ankle; and when,

the summit once reached, the cool, refreshing breeze plays with a few escaped locks of silky hair, where is the charming woman who does not look more charming still?

Our discreet old friend, Captain Lifton, had long been as an artist an admirer of the beauties of nature. He now found himself admiring the beauties of womanhood, as Nellie and Mollie stood before him on the top of Sheep Tor. In a minute Nellie had turned away, and with her back to the rest, and her hand making a shade over her eyes, stood gazing silently out over the beautiful stretch of country that lay beneath them; but Mollie—Lifton could not take his eyes off her as she leaned against the rock smiling down at him. He had always thought her handsome, but he thought her simply lovely to-day, and she certainly did look well with her soft hair blown in loose wavy locks about her face, and her splendid complexion made richer and fairer by the moorland breeze. He had also always liked her the better of the two girls, for, though he considered Nellie clever and amusing, he could never quite get over an uncomfortable sensation of mistrust, when in her company, as to what she might do or say next. Latterly he had seen a great deal of the two girls, and Mollie's gentle, unselfish ways had grown upon him. Almost unconsciously to himself, he had got to think of her as a constant companion, and to wonder what her opinion would be of his painting and all other subjects in which he was interested. To-day, out there on the moor together, he had suddenly felt, with a sinking of the heart, what a dull, lonely life his would again be if the regiment were to be ordered off and he be separated for ever from Mollie. At this point his reverie was interrupted by Nellie's loud laugh.

"What *are* you thinking of, Captain Lifton? Has

Mollie's back hair come off, or any of her buttons? You may not be aware of it, but you have been gazing at one another fixedly for the last five minutes. Pardon me for having interrupted you, but I could really stand it no longer."

Lifton reddened all over his bronzed countenance, and muttered something about "Been thinking."

"Yes," said Nellie, "you looked as if you were thinking; but I advise you not to think quite so hard for the future, it's dangerous; no ordinary brain could stand that sort of thing!"

Mollie meanwhile had got Nellie's sketch-book from Jack, and, telling her sister not to talk so much nonsense, set both her and "Bung" to work at their sketching; she and Jack made a comfortable nest for themselves in the heather, tickling one another's necks with sprigs of heath, under the pretence of "wasps," and behaving themselves generally in the indecorous way in which intimate friends, with nothing to do on a mountain-side of a warm day, are wont to behave. Mollie's cheerful talk and laughter seemed to have a capital effect on Jack Treleaven's spirits, for all the homeward way he and Nellie chaffed one another on the most amicable terms, without having anything like a quarrel. As for "Bung," he did not say much, but he looked very happy, and told Jack on his way back to Plymouth that his sketch had been most successful.

CHAPTER X.

JACK GOES FISHING AND CATCHES A SALMON.

THE days went on quietly enough for the several characters in this story. Jack Treleaven, whenever he could escape from his military duties, went to Horrabridge, and fished nearly every day until the season closed at the end of October, dropping in from time to time at Moor Lodge on his way to and from the river. Captain Hemmings also was to be seen oftener on the platform of Horrabridge station, with his rod in hand, than formerly, but somehow this gentleman did not seem a very successful piscator, generally returning without a single fish in his basket. The teasing he got from the Miss Watsons, when they met him on any of these occasions, he bore with great equanimity. He readily admitted now, whenever comparisons were drawn, that Jack was by far the better fisherman of the two; and attributed entirely to luck the fact that he had run him pretty close in point of numbers of fish killed in the earlier part of the year. They told him they thought him very persevering; but he replied that the fresh country air agreed with him after the smell of salt-water, and as long as he could enjoy that, and contemplate the beauties of nature by land as well as by sea, he was happy—fish or no fish! To show them that he was not singular in his tastes, and

that old Izaak Walton was two hundred years previously of precisely the same opinion, he began one day to quote the following stanzas from the pen of that "father of angling":

"I care not I to fish in seas,
Fresh rivers best my mind do please,
Whose sweet calm course I contemplate,
And seek in life to imitate;
In civil bounds I fain would keep
And for my past offences weep.
And when the timourous trout I wait
To take, and he devours my bait,
How poor a thing sometimes I find
Will captivate a greedy mind!
And when none bite, I praise the wise
Whom vain allurements ne'er surprise."

If anything had been necessary to convince the ladies that Captain Hemmings was the enthusiast for the beauties of nature that he declared himself to be, the air with which he delivered the above quaint lines was enough. Even the astute Nellie was quite delighted to find the sailor of such a poetic temperament.

"Why," she exclaimed, "I am astonished! I should have thought you much too matter-of-fact to be a 'Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything' young man; but live and learn. I wish I too could live up to that kind of thing, but I fear I am far too prosaic for such a charming life of contemplation."

"Well," said Hemmings, "I am going away for some time almost directly, amongst other visits to stay with the Triscotts at Ilfracombe, so I shall not be able to follow this life much longer. If, however, you should care to try for one day what living up to it is like, why should not you

and your sister walk down to the river with me now, as you seem to have nothing particular to do? Perhaps we shall come across Treleaven down there; as this is one of the last days, he is sure to be at it. These soldiers have the pull over us in everything, you see; lazy beggars with nothing to do, they can catch the early train, if they have sufficient energy to get up in time, which I believe Treleaven has."

"I can't come," said Mollie, "but that is no reason why Nellie shouldn't. She is quite old enough to chaperone you over her native heath alone. If you do meet any one on this lone waste, they will look at Nellie and say, 'Oh! it's only *that* Miss Watson,' nobody for ten miles round is ever the least surprised at anything she does. She has no character to lose, I assure you!"

"Thank you, Mollie, for taking away my character so thoroughly," said the elder sister. "At least, as you say I haven't any, you can't well take it away, can you? I'm afraid you're right, though, and that it has 'gone, like last year's summer, gone like my aunt's best spoons.' But that is not the question. Am I to go with Captain Hemmings or not? I think, on the whole, having nothing better to do (excuse apparent rudeness), Yes!"

"Bring Jack Treleaven back with you, and I'll give you all something to eat, that is, if you and Captain Hemmings are not satisfied with contemplative food beforehand."

"Oh, you wag!" said Nellie, "your sarcasm is quite too cutting. I fancy, however, that Mr. Jack will, in all probability, bring himself, and, as he's sure to have an appetite for three, it would be as well if you provided sufficient for that number;" and off they started on their fishing excursion.

Mollie looked after them until they were out of sight, and then turned slowly back to the house.

"What was it," she kept on thinking to herself, "that she could never quite like about Captain Hemmings?" He was good-looking and agreeable, and had never done or said anything in any way to prejudice her against him; but still she had that unaccountable feeling of slight mistrust when in his society—a feeling that, when he was most open and above-board in his manner, he was in reality most determined to conceal. But Nellie liked him; so she supposed it was all right, and, dismissing the subject from her thoughts, she entered the house, and was soon engaged with "cook" in deep calculation over butcher's and baker's books, which had been somewhat neglected lately for the picnic, painting, and sketching excursions of the season.

Hemmings did not lead his fair companion in the direction he generally pursued when going to the River Tavy, but shaped his course, to use one of his own nautical expressions, for a point quite a mile higher up, where, as the banks were very thickly wooded, anglers seldom resorted. They talked gaily as they went down over the moor, Nellie certainly not giving her companion time for much contemplation; nor did she appear much in the humour for it herself. Had they known it, however, a surprise was waiting for them, sufficient to give one, if not both of them, food for contemplation enough to last for many days to come. As they came down to the river's brink, through the now almost leafless trees, they could see its course for some distance without being observed by any one on its banks. They were making for a deep pool not entirely devoid of current, where Hemmings proposed commencing his fishing operations, and had just turned the corner of a large rock

close to it, when a sight met their eyes, causing Nellie Watson to turn pale, as she uttered a cry of surprise and grasped her companion's arm tightly. Richard Hemmings, too, started back, while a deep flush of rage spread itself over his dark face, and an oath passed his lips which he had never before uttered in the presence of a woman. But it passed unnoticed by Nellie, who seemed petrified where she stood. This was what they saw.

At the bottom of the pool the water ran shoal, smooth but rapid over a ledge of rock, preparatory to tumbling in a little cascade into another deep hole. In the middle of the river stood a man, withstanding with difficulty the force of the current as he staggered along with a burden in his arms. What was it? No! their eyes had not deceived them. It was a young girl with legs bare above the knees, where his arms clasped her, her dress trailing in the water, her arms round the man's neck!

In a moment Nellie had recognised both. The man, fighting with the current, and supporting himself with one hand with the handle of a landing-net, while the other supported the bare-legged girl, was—Jack Treleaven! And the girl? Laura Luscombe! See, there were her pretty little high-heeled boots and her stockings lying on the opposite bank, beside a fishing-rod and large fishing-bag, which accidentally concealed from view a fine, newly-killed salmon.

"Disgraceful!" exclaimed Nellie, loud enough to be heard by Jack, in spite of the roar of the rapid below, startling him so that as he glanced in the direction of the voice, and saw by whom he was observed, he nearly dropped his fair burden in mid-stream. Nellie did not remain to think or see more of what she considered his disgusting

behaviour. She never noticed how dead was the weight he was carrying, nor how pale the little face lying on his shoulder.

"Come," she said, dragging Hemmings away forcibly, and then, woman-like, turning upon him. "I ought to be extremely obliged to you for your kindness in bringing me here to behold such an exhibition." And then in tones of as much sorrow as rage: "I had no idea that Jack Treleaven could be such a brute!"

There was no more talk of fishing that day, and they retraced their steps to Moor Lodge in gloomy silence.

Let us now take a glance at Jack, who was, for the second time in this history, seriously compromised, not, however, on this occasion, as upon the last, without the satisfaction of knowing how he had become so. He reached the bank, but not a moment too soon, for even as he did so the grasp of the arms round his neck had relaxed, and he perceived that Laura was in a dead faint. Fortunately for them both she had, by the mere force of muscular action, held on so long, for she had fainted before Nellie and Hemmings appeared upon the scene. He laid her down on the bank and tried with all the care of a woman to restore her, but for a long time ineffectually.

Jack was soft-hearted to a fault, and, not being accustomed to women fainting, became really frightened. Little cared he at this moment who might observe him, could he only bring her to again, as, having in vain dashed water in her face, he set to work frantically rubbing her hands and dainty little feet, carefully drying them first with his pocket-handkerchief. He was beginning in his fright to think that Laura was dead, when a soft sigh and quiver of the eyelids told him she was still alive. He redoubled his efforts until

she was sufficiently restored to sit up and put on her shoes and stockings, although, as she was otherwise soaking wet, she might as well have been without those articles of attire.

And now it is time that our readers should know that which Nellie Watson had never stopped to inquire: what was the meaning of all this, and how it all came about. Jack had met Laura some way down the river as she was returning from a solitary walk. Her first exclamation on seeing him was:

"Oh, I am so glad to have met you, I've just seen a salmon, a beautiful clean-run fish, rise twice; you must come up the river and try to catch him."

Jack was at first incredulous, as a salmon is a very *rarus piscis* indeed in the Tavy until after the close of the angling season, when they begin to come up from the sea into that, as well as into other west-country streams. However, he had heard of occasional ones being killed, and Laura soon persuaded him that she had not lived all her life on the banks of the river without knowing a veritable salmon from a peal. He acceded to her request, therefore, to go up the river.

Laura made a capital companion, and was full of enthusiasm. She pointed out the exact spot where she had seen him rise, behind a rock at the very head of the pool. Jack admitted that it certainly did look like the "lie" of a salmon, and, selecting a likely fly, he put on a stronger cast of gut. At the very second throw, and just as the fly swept round out of the stream in behind the rock, what were Jack's sensations as he saw a large quiet "boil," which did not, however, break the surface, in the water at the end of his line? Well he knew what that meant! It was the rise of a "real fish," as the salmon is called *par excellence* by

anglers, and it was also the rise of a taking fish. His heart jumped into his mouth as he struck a little harder than perhaps he would have done had "fish" been plenty. As he did so the rod, which was of good material but rather light for the work, bent double, and the line flew out through the rings as the fish, being hooked and keeping deep, dashed up-stream where the water ran heaviest. No doubt now as to whether it was a salmon or not—no peal in the river could have faced the stream at that pace!

Fortunate, indeed, was it that the precaution had been taken of putting on a heavier cast; the weight of the water would infallibly have broken the one just removed, especially when the fish flew into the air several times in succession in his vain endeavours to remove the obnoxious insect that had fixed itself so firmly in his mouth. Jack tried to keep cool, but he was trembling all over with excitement, and Laura also, as they saw the sides of the salmon shining like burnished silver in his frantic leaps. Jack, however, had presence of mind enough to lower the point of the rod to him at each jump, and, as he followed him closely, keeping as short a line as possible, found after the third leap that he still had him on safe. After his leaps the fish still kept on steadily up-stream, but moving much slower.

They had now reached a place where the river narrowed very much and was beset with rocks and bushes. If he once got among them he was lost, as, although clad in wading things, it was no place where the fisherman could by any means follow him.

"For goodness' sake, turn him if you can," said Laura.

"I must try to do so even if I break everything," said Jack, and, suiting the action to the word, he put on such a strain as his little rod had never felt before.

The fish turned, and, apparently not one whit tired by his previous exploits, flew down the current and back towards the pool like a sky-rocket, making the reel screech again as the line ran out, although Jack followed at a run along the bank for fifty or sixty yards back to the pool in his efforts to keep close to his quarry. The salmon now halted in his old quarters behind the rock and began to sulk, at the same time jagging his nose in the ground to rub out the hook, to the imminent risk of cutting the line. This must be stopped at all hazards. At Jack's direction, Laura commenced throwing stones, but down-stream of him, for fear that, in descending, the weight of the stream should carry them against the line, and either break it or loosen the hold. The fish hereupon took another run, this time across the pool and back again, to recommence the same tactics.

But stones were plentiful, and Laura kept him on the move until he was evidently getting tired out, for he came up to the top of the water and began to show, giving a roll over every now and then in a way which, although satisfactory as showing he was nearly beaten, was very trying to the hold. But he was not done yet, and he now took it into his fishy brain to execute a manœuvre which was not only calculated to render all Jack's labour in vain and secure his own escape, but which was the direct cause of the dilemma in which Captain Hemmings and Miss Watson had discovered the pair. Slowly and irresistibly he swam across and down the pool until, just at its tail, and where, close to the opposite bank, a deep eddy was overhung by some bushes, he gave an expiring jump. He was successful in the first part of his plan, and had jumped over a long wattle projecting out into the river; the line had pitched

over it, just the length of the cast, and he himself still lay splashing in the eddy.

The wattle was strong and pliable, yielding to his struggles and playing him nearly as effectually as the rod; but vain as his endeavours to escape, were Jack's to lift his line clear. The distance was too great; the whole width of the pool was between them. All he could do was to keep it tight—to slacken it would be to lose the fish altogether. The line moved backwards and forwards over the wattle, but a twig sticking up prevented its being slipped off again by any means; should the salmon take it into his head to move but a few yards back into the centre of the pool, he was lost, as indeed it seemed to both Jack and his fair attendant he must be in any case. Now it was that the latter displayed her presence of mind and showed herself to be mistress of the situation. Exclaiming, "I'll save him yet!" she sat down on the bank, and had her shoes and stockings off in a moment; then, regardless of appearances, or anything but the fish, she had in another moment taken Jack's long-handled landing-net as a support, and sprung into the shoal water at the tail of the pool.

The bottom just there was of firm gravel and did not hurt her feet, but she found the water considerably heavier than she thought. Advancing sideways, it was nearly up to her knees at first, and got still deeper as she went on. Jack shouted to her not to mind the fish, but to return, but Laura was not the kind of girl to turn back from anything she had made up her mind to do. She cried out:

"It's all right. The current is not so heavy here. You mind the line and I can get on well enough!"

And so she could in the excitement of the moment, especially as just then the salmon gave another desperate

splash, giving her a pang of fear lest he should escape after all. Just as she reached the end of the eddy, she found herself on a shifting sand, and sank a little in it, but with a scramble she obtained a firm footing on a flat rock, over which the water was running not fast, and barely knee-deep. She was now just within reach of the wattle, but, as she touched it, the fish saw her and made a plunge in the direction most to be feared, *i.e*, towards the centre of the pool. For a moment it seemed as if the line must break, but, shouting to Jack, "Look out! raise the point of your rod," she pressed down the wattle with the handle of the net, leaning on it with all her force. The line passed over the twig that was holding it, and all was again clear, the salmon nearly touching her as he passed out into the middle of the pool.

To land him now was a comparatively easy task for Jack, as, although without gaff or landing-net, he stood upon a nice sloping bank, and after a few minutes more was able to get the now thoroughly exhausted fish on the shallow, then moving out below, while having out only a line the length of the rod, one successful dash, and the fish was held by the gills in a grip of iron by Jack's right hand. Useless all his kicking now. There he lay on the sward, a magnificent fellow of about fourteen pounds' weight.

Laura had paused upon the rock to see the end of the fray, and to recover her breath, which she had quite lost in the unwonted exertions. When she had seen the fish landed and knocked on the head, she attempted to return. She now, however, became aware for the first time that the water was excessively cold, and that a chill and numbness was creeping through her limbs. Scarcely had she stepped into the deeper water and on to the shifting sand, than she

found herself almost entirely unable to move from cramp. She screamed to Jack, who, to do him justice, was not unmindful of her, and who had started to assist her after giving the fish a knock on the head as a precautionary measure, without waiting even to take the hook out of his mouth. It was well he had tarried no longer, for Laura was in a dangerous plight. Just below where she stood she now perceived what in going out she had not noticed, namely, that the water was quite deep, and, good heavens! she was slipping down the sand into the hole. She made another desperate struggle, which, although it brought her fortunately to the edge of the firm bottom over which Jack was advancing to meet her, also plunged her deeper into the water, which was now nearly up to her waist. She saw it was useless attempting to proceed, and stood perfectly still, supporting herself with the landing-net. It seemed as if Jack would never reach her, her strength too was rapidly leaving her, as cramped and benumbed she felt herself slipping inch by inch towards the hole.

He was just in time. Reaching from the edge of the firm ground he was able to take hold of the landing-net which she still grasped, and to help her to place her arms round his neck. He then contrived to draw her up the sloping bank into the shallow water, Laura the while obeying his instructions mechanically. He managed with difficulty to lift her in his arms; as he did so, she fainted. It was at that very moment that Captain Hemmings and Nellie Watson had come round the corner of the rock, and witnessed this, to them, extraordinary performance, little knowing how narrowly they had escaped seeing a woman drowning. Had the impulsive Nellie but known the true facts of the case, in place of at once assuming that this was

some piece of indelicate romping on the part of poor Laura, how different might have been the current of her thoughts and her behaviour; not indeed that either she or her companion could, at the time, have been of much use, as there was no bridge or means of crossing the river within a mile of where they stood, either up or down the stream.

When Laura had recovered consciousness, Jack forced her, very much against her inclination, to take a good dose of whisky from his flask, of which she soon felt the benefit, and was able in a minute or two to walk with his help.

Her first words were words of apology to Jack for all the trouble she had given him, and for having been so silly as to faint! She asked to have a look at the salmon, and laughed delightedly when Jack called her a plucky little girl, and said that the salmon would not have been there but for her. She seemed to have forgotten her recent danger, and declared she would willingly go through another wetting for another salmon. Not so Jack! Enthusiast as he was, not for a hundred thousand salmon would he that a girl should again risk her life in such a way.

They walked rapidly back to the mill, she leaning on his arm, talking earnestly all the time, so that any one seeing them might have thought them a pair of young lovers. She seemed to be appealing in some way to him from the expression of her up-turned face, which looked white and delicate now, from her late shock, with the fragile loveliness of a wild hedge-rose.

They parted at the mill gate, Laura refusing to take the fish, which she said would be no use to her, and telling Jack she wished his friends "in along" to see it. After a few more words, he took her hand and said:

"It is a bargain then, Laura? You promise faithfully?"

"Yes," she replied, after a moment's hesitation, "I solemnly promise."

Jack paced thoughtfully back the three and a half miles across the moor. It was well on in the afternoon when he reached the station, for, not feeling inclined to have an interview with Nellie that evening, he resolved to go into Plymouth by a train that would soon pass.

Needless to say his salmon was the object of the envy and admiration of several of his brother anglers, who were waiting for the same train. Jack frankly told them that, but for Miss Luscombe, the fish would have been alive at that moment. He did not enter into more particulars, but of course this was quite sufficient to give them a wide field for chaff. Some of the young fishermen even went so far as to call him "a sly dog!" others remarked that he knew what he was about when he took a pretty girl fishing with him, especially as he managed to kill "two fish with one hook," etc., etc.

But Jack was in no humour for badinage, so instead of as usual going home with the other fishermen in a third-class smoking-carriage, which they had to themselves and their "fish" talk, he quietly at the last moment evaded the rest and betook himself with his fish into a first-class carriage which he got to himself. As he went home he resolved to go out on the day after the morrow—for on the morrow he expected to be "on duty"—and explain to Nellie Watson the equivocal position in which she had found him. At first, in the righteousness of his cause, he made up his mind that he would be above giving any explanation. He felt angry with Nellie for turning up at such a time, and for so evidently believing at once the very worst of him—with Hemmings, too, who he expected would make a good story

out of the whole thing. Is there anything that irritates a man so much as the idea of being made ridiculous? But on reflection he could not but acknowledge to himself that the situation, to say the least of it, must have seemed peculiar to an onlooker; he therefore determined, as aforesaid, to go out to Horrabridge and right himself at all events in Nellie's eyes.

Among those who had overheard the chaff at the station, or some of it, was Hemmings himself. He had gone with Nellie as far as the gates of Moor Lodge, but she did not press him to go in, and he went back to the station, arriving there just before Jack. Although burning to hear Jack's own account of what he knew must have been some strange adventure with Laura Luscombe, he kept with characteristic stealth in the background, and did not get into the train with the other fishermen until he had seen Jack settle himself in the empty first-class carriage. On the way home, he heard of course all that Jack had told the others about it, and, on getting out at Devonport station, purposely threw himself in Jack's way, and asked to see the fish. Jack showed it to him, but neither made any allusion to what was uppermost in both their minds.

"Are you going out again to-morrow to try for another?" asked Hemmings, casually, as they parted.

"No," said Jack, shortly, "the day after."

When the day after came, Jack had left Plymouth on long leave. A telegram, on important family business, had compelled him, he told the colonel, to take first instead of second leave.

Strange to say, on the same date pretty Laura Luscombe disappeared from the mill at Denham Bridge!

CHAPTER XI.

TRISTILLIAN.

ADA, her uncle, and her brother were now at Tristillian—a fine old place near Dawlish, belonging to their cousin Mr. Trefry.

This gentleman had been brought up in his youth with Ada's father, and her uncle, William Triscott, and they had maintained in after-life the brotherly affection they had felt for one another as boys. Mr. Trefry's house was always open to his cousins, who were nearly as much at home there as at Penallyn. The first part of the shooting season was generally passed by William Triscott with his cousin, whose coverts were well stocked with pheasants.

Mr. Trefry's family consisted of his wife and one daughter—Rose. The latter was a year or two older than Ada. She was a tall, handsome girl, and had seen a good deal of excitement in London and elsewhere; on the strength of which she was a little given to patronising her more unsophisticated cousin. The two were, however, fast friends, writing constantly to one another, as girls will; and we may be sure that, in Ada's letters, Jack's name had not been unfrequently mentioned—especially as Rose had herself met him at Plymouth. Having seen him also in the Park occasionally during the season, she was quite

inclined to take an interest in the handsome young officer, whose dancing she remembered as "simply delightful."

Accustomed as she was to hear of Jack's sayings and doings whenever she wrote to her, Miss Trefry was not a little surprised to find, after her cousin had been at Tristillian for a short time, that Jack's name had never once been mentioned. She noticed also that Ada's spirits were by no means so good as they were wont to be, and that, although she laughed and seemed gay at times, there was not a true ring about it; and, when the excitement of the moment passed off, she looked pale and worn, and her manner became dull and abstracted. So Rose began to think that something serious was the matter, and shrewdly suspected that Mr. Jack Treleaven was at the bottom of it, whatever it was. Nor was she wrong. Poor Ada was indeed moping after Jack. The state of incertitude she was in as to how matters stood with regard to Nellie Watson made it worse. When she received letters from friends in Plymouth, she tore them open eagerly, hoping, yet fearing, to get the intelligence she looked for and dreaded.

"Was he engaged to Nellie Watson? Had she accepted him or not?" were the questions she asked herself a thousand times a day. She was too proud to ask the question directly from any of her correspondents, but she wrote often, hoping to hear something definite soon, for the suspense she felt was almost more than she could bear. She wondered, as the month wore on, that some good-natured friend did not write her the news of Jack's engagement, and she looked in every Plymouth letter for the dreaded paragraph commencing: "I have some news that may interest you about a friend of yours," etc. But no!

Jack might have been dead and buried for all her friends appeared to know or care. It was inexplicable. Oh, what a relief it would be if she could only learn the worst at once! She became more depressed, and gave up writing to her Plymouth friends at last.

"What was the use? They would not tell her what she wanted to know."

Rose Trefry had, out of good-nature, forborne to ask her any questions for the first fortnight, hoping that whatever had gone wrong would improve, and Ada soon recover her spirits. Finding, however, that in place of mending, things became if anything worse, and Ada more melancholy and nervous every day, Rose determined at last to find out what had happened, and see if nothing could be done to make poor Ada happy and cheerful again. Said Rose to herself:

"A young thing like that must not have a secret, and get dull and gloomy, if I can help it. I dare say it is only some lovers' quarrel that she is worrying and fretting herself to death over, that can easily be set right."

To tell the truth, also, Rose had her full share of feminine curiosity, and wished greatly to hear all about it, and know what it was that had so completely changed her once bright and merry cousin.

One night, towards the end of October, she went as usual into Ada's room to sit by the fire in her dressing-gown, and have a chat before they went to bed. This had formerly been the time for confidences of all sorts between the two girls, and they would often sit up until long after midnight, talking and laughing over people and things, and telling one another of their conquests and adventures; sometimes giving one another sage advice, or making plans

for their future life—plans in all probability hardly remembered next morning, with the ready forgetfulness of youth. But latterly it had been different. Rose could feel that poor Ada, though still loving and sweet in her manner, was evidently relieved when she bid her good-night and left her room.

"However," said Rose, "I won't let this go on much longer;" and that very night she went into Ada's room, and when they were sitting side by side at the fire, she suddenly laid her hand on Ada's, and began:

"Now then, Ada, before another morning breaks you must tell me all about it. Why are you always moping and looking so unhappy? Now, don't prevaricate;" for Ada was beginning to say she was not unhappy. "I can see quite well that there is something wrong since you came here. You had much better tell me. It's not a good thing for a girl of your age to have a secret upon her mind;" and Rose looked very sapient. "Now, is it Jack Treleaven? I feel convinced it's something about that former hero of yours. *Raison de plus*, you have never once spoken of him since you came here. Now you must not mind me, it will be much better for you to tell;" and she drew Ada's burning face on her shoulder and kissed her.

The kind voice and manner touched the unhappy girl to the heart, and burying her face in her cousin's bosom, she began to sob uncontrollably.

Rose soothed her as best she could, but she could not help crying for sympathy herself, and it was some little time before either of them could find voice enough to speak. Then it all came out. Locked in each other's arms, the whole story was told. How she loved Jack, how she believed until lately that he loved her. How also,

although Ada had always known that Nellie Watson was an intimate friend of his, she attached no importance to that fact until the fatal day of the picnic, when she heard him proposing to Nellie in unmistakable terms; and then, worst of all, the uncertainty as to whether she had accepted him or not, and her own inability to find out. She had tried hard, she said, to think no more of him; she hated herself for it, but it was useless. She could not banish him from her thoughts, nor help hoping that it had all been some miserable mistake, and that he would come back to her the same kind, honest, *débonnaire* Jack she had known and loved.

As to Rose, she became more utterly aghast at every word. Ada had "heard him propose to Miss Watson with her own ears!" What could that mean but that he meant to marry her, and had only been flirting and amusing himself with Ada? Poor Ada! she hoped it would "turn out to be a mistake," and that he would "return to his allegiance!" Rose knew it was worse than folly for her to lay that "flattering unction to her soul." Mr. Jack Treleaven was a mean, heartless wretch, amusing himself with every pretty girl he met, and engaging her affections just to throw her over for the next pretty face; and Rose breathed a short prayer that he might meet his match some day, and be amply repaid for all the sorrow he was now causing. However, all these thoughts she kept to herself, telling Ada, as cheerily as she could, that she would do everything in her power to find out the truth, and bidding her keep up her spirits, "for the good time would surely come."

And Ada went to sleep that night with a lighter heart than she had had for many a long day.

Rose determined to waste no time in finding out what Ada desired to know. She said:

"I will write to the Mansfields—they are intimate friends of the Watsons. If anybody will know, it is Blanche Mansfield."

Next day, therefore, she wrote to her friend, carefully leaving the question she wished answered until the end, when it was put in a postscript in the following terms:

"By-the-bye, my dear, when you are writing, don't forget to tell me if it is really true that Mr. Treleaven is engaged to Miss Watson?"

After the lapse of a day or two an answer arrived. It ran as follows:

"My dearest Rose,

"Fancy your thinking that Mr. Treleaven was engaged to Nellie Watson! Whoever told you that must have dreamed it. I am glad to say that such a thing was never even reported here. I must tell you that I *did* hear he was engaged to your cousin, Miss Triscott, but I suppose it was only gossip—indeed, I hope so for her sake, as he has turned out to be such a horrible scamp. Of course you have not heard the story. He has run away with a girl belonging to this place. She was missed two days ago, and my mother, who was coming from Torquay that very day, saw Mr. Treleaven put her into a carriage at Newton Abbot Junction, *and go in himself after her.* So you see there is no shadow of doubt about it. But I forgot to tell you who the girl is. She is a miller's daughter near here, called Laura Luscombe, a stuck-up little thing with some pretensions to good looks. She was well-educated, I believe, and imagined herself a lady. I must say I never expected her to come to any good; she was quite above her station, and the airs she gave herself at the Sunday

School, where our vicar, a very good-natured man, kindly allowed her to teach, were simply ridiculous. We heard of her being missed at once, and the poor people at the mill were in the greatest state of mind. They were dragging the river when mother returned from Torquay. Although she would much rather not have mentioned such a thing at all, she was obliged to say what she had seen to stop the useless search. It was too late for the poor old miller to attempt recapturing his daughter if he wished to, which I should think doubtful."

A few more rather malicious remarks ended this very agreeable letter. There was a spiteful tone running through the whole letter—against Ada, against Laura, and against Jack Treleaven—which Rose could not account for at first, until she remembered that when Jack was a stranger in these parts, and before Ada appeared upon the scene, she had heard that he admired Blanche Mansfield, who, although not very pretty, was a pleasant, ladylike girl. Miss Mansfield had a score to wipe off with Ada, but, to do her justice, she little knew how thoroughly and completely her letter to Rose Trefry would do it.

Rose groaned as she finished reading it. This was really awful! Could she in any way avoid showing the letter to Ada, she might at least soften down the cruel facts in telling her. The thought had hardly passed through her mind, when Ada entered the room, and seeing the letter in her hand asked for it, and Rose knew it would be useless to try to withhold it. Alas, poor Ada! What an awakening was hers! The irritation caused by the mention of her own name was rapidly swallowed up in the infinite disgust and horror she experienced as she perused the missive to the end.

Having read it once, she turned the page and deliberately read it through a second time. Every letter, every syllable, seemed to impress itself upon her brain as if it were written in fire. Very pale, very handsome and noble did she look as she handed back the letter to her cousin, saying quietly:

"Thank you, dear Rose, I now see that you are perfectly right; I have been very foolish, and, thank heaven, until now I have known nothing of the world. Oh that I had never learned such a bitter lesson of the wickedness and heartlessness of men! It will be one to last me my whole life. I never wish to hear *his* name again; and now let us have done with the whole painful subject."

Rose was crying, but Ada's face was perfectly composed.

"Don't be sorry, darling," she said, kneeling down beside her cousin and kissing her. "See, I don't mind!" setting her features into a stiff smile. "It is much better as it is; he is too vile and wicked to waste a thought on. Come, get on your things; a walk will do you good." And again kissing Rose affectionately she got up and left the room.

From that day the name that had been the dearest in the world to Ada—even when she had thought its owner was to marry Nellie Watson — was religiously tabooed between the girls.

William Triscott and George of course heard the news in due time; but they were far too considerate to refer to it in any way to Ada. William Triscott felt sincerely sorry to hear that his favourite, Jack, had gone so utterly to the bad, and found a difficulty in crediting the news; for he had, being an observant man, believed him to be much

attached to his niece, and he could hardly think it possible that Jack would thus outrage her best feelings, even though he had made no open declaration of love to her.

Had Jack Treleaven not been previously paying attentions to his niece, Mr. Triscott—who was a man of the world himself, and had, moreover, not been one of the steadiest in his own youth—would have inclined to condone the offence. Under the circumstances, however, he could not but feel disgusted and disappointed. Speaking of the matter to his cousin, Mr. Trefry, he said:

"It all comes of being in the army. I am glad, my dear fellow, that neither you nor I have a son in that profession. Men join it very young, to find a very slack tone of morality prevailing among their seniors, and, from having so much idle time on their hands, they too soon fall into the same groove. A colonel of a regiment has plenty to do besides looking after the morals of his subalterns, and, having been brought up in the same school himself, is apt to look upon their little indiscretions in a very venial light—should he accidentally become aware of them—often merely as a good joke. Is it then so much to be wondered at, that these boys, full of life and high spirits—good fellows enough, many of them, if only they had a little encouragement to keep straight—should run into follies and commit faults quickly repented of and bitterly regretted throughout a lifetime? Depend upon it, my dear fellow, the army is not the best profession to put a boy into, unless he has strength to resist its temptations, and a wisdom beyond his years. I'm really sorry about Jack Treleaven!"

George had a few words on the same subject with his cousin Rose. He said: "He thought, on the whole, it was as well that Mr. Treleaven had done something that would

make his sister give up thinking of him altogether; that now, at any rate, she could not bother her head any more about him; and it was quite evident that if he could, while making love to her, go and calmly propose to another girl —to say nothing of this last escapade—he was not a man worth caring about. If you will excuse my saying so, Rose, an—adjective—blackguard, is what I call him. I can't make out why Uncle William is so fond of the fellow. I think we are well rid of him."

George felt very strongly the shameful way in which he considered his sister had been treated, and had he at that moment had an opportunity of an interview with our hero himself, very hard things might have been said and done by this young sailor.

CHAPTER XII.

FOX ABANDONS HIS PLANS OF PURSUIT.

THERE was yet another person at Tristillian at this time, to whom the knowledge of Laura Luscombe's elopement with Jack Treleaven came as a severe blow. This was no other than William Fox. That true-hearted blue-jacket had accompanied the Triscotts thither. Looking after the guns, and doing all sorts of useful things, he was invaluable as general handy man. By the death of a relation, William had just become possessed of some little property, and he was talking of leaving the sea and becoming a farmer; he would then be in a better position, and, with some money to back him, purposed to prosecute his suit with Laura, who he hoped would not prove obdurate for ever. He had loved her truly for years; but although he knew she "looked higher," and considered herself above him, as she had always been kind and friendly, he fancied he might now have a chance.

At the dreadful news all his hopes were dashed to the ground, and his whole future wrecked by a villain. Neither the Triscotts nor the Trefrys had told him—he had heard the whole unhappy story from his friend the old miller in this way: When he had heard of his own good fortune, he had written immediately to Laura's father, apprising him of

it, and telling him that he intended retiring from the navy. He had at the same time forwarded some presents to his friends at the mill. These articles he had been unable to get at on his first return from sea, and so they were sent now. Among other things, some pretty ornaments for Laura. In a few days came the miller's reply, telling of the dreadful calamity that had befallen them—the disappearance of their daughter! He further stated that her abductor was an officer of the —th Regiment, who used frequently to be on the river fishing—a gentleman of the name of Treleaven; she had been seen in his company the day she left home. The miller went on to say that he had the greatest difficulty in believing that Mr. Treleaven, whom he had known well, and thought very highly of, could have been guilty of so base an act. He had gone at once to inquire for him at the regiment, and was then informed that Mr. Treleaven had gone abroad. That same evening he received a letter dated from Paris from his unhappy daughter, asking his forgiveness and telling him not to fret about her, that she was happy. He could no longer have a doubt young Treleaven was his daughter's seducer, and the old man cursed him from his heart for a sneaking, hypocritical villain.

When Fox received this letter he was stunned. He too knew this Mr. Treleaven, having often met him at Mr. Triscott's, and, like everybody else, had been greatly prepossessed by Jack's frank and open manner. Gnashing his teeth with rage, William Fox swore to be avenged upon the destroyer of sweet little Laura Luscombe. Laura! whom he had watched growing up from pretty innocent childhood into beautiful womanhood; and whom he had worshipped in his heart as the embodiment of all goodness and purity.

What was she now? The last pretty plaything of an idle and vicious young scoundrel, to be kissed and petted as long as the fancy lasted, and then, when the novelty had worn off, to be cast aside for some new toy. He did not blame her; he could not blame her. He thought of her youth and innocence, and knew she had been deceived. He thought of the cruel awakening that must come sooner or later, and—with a shudder—of what her future life might be: cut off from the influence of all good women, with neither hope nor self-respect, to what depths of degradation might she not sink? And—bitterest thought of all—how helpless he was to save her!

Oh, how broken-hearted he felt as he reviewed his own past life for the last five years! Present in his mind had ever been one image to cheer him in the tempest, or during the lonely watches of the night. Out at the yard-arm reefing topsails in the gale; at the wheel when the salt spray dashed over and around him, and the sea-birds shrieked overhead—Laura Luscombe's memory had been his one haven of hope, his sole light of refuge. Of her memory he felt indeed as the old poet says of the girdle:

> "It was his heaven's extremest sphere,
> The pale that held that lovely dear;
> His hope, his joy, his fear, his love,
> Did all within that circle move."

Half an hour ago he had been a hopeful, happy man—and now what was he? A mere broken spar tossed to and fro in a restless sea of misery and disappointment, no haven of tranquil peace to look forward to, no guiding star in his dark night. He had staked everything on the certainty of sooner or later winning this woman's heart and making her his wife. And he had lost, "Yes, lost, lost,

lost!" he muttered. "What is there now to live for? Nothing!" and, laying his arms on the table where he sat, he laid his head on his hands and wept aloud. But all is not yet over; there is something still to live for—a duty to be performed. He will have vengeance on the man who has blasted her life and his own. And, raising his head from his arms, William Fox looked towards heaven and solemnised his determination with an oath. As his passions subsided and he grew calmer, his thoughts again reverted to Laura. Is it not still possible to do something for her before she is ruined, body and soul? He would try to discover where she was hidden, and take her back to her father's house. This resolution brought him some comfort, and he felt that he must now be active and not let the grass grow under his feet.

His discharge from the navy was instantly applied for, but there were more obstacles in the way than he had reckoned upon. Several weeks elapsed, and still the parchment certificate he so much longed for, which was to make him a free man, remained unsigned. His intention was to proceed instantly to Paris. From his habits of application, he had, while in French ports, picked up a good deal of the language, in addition to what he had learned in his youth at a good middle-class school. Once in Paris, he would hunt for Laura until he found her, and would then persuade, or if necessary force, her to return. This was the somewhat wild idea which took possession of his mind and grew there, while he waited on from day to day with Lieutenant Triscott at Tristillian, hourly expecting his release, without which, if he left the kingdom, he rendered himself liable to be arrested on his return as a deserter. He had no choice but to remain where he was,

fretting and fuming at the delay which was making him haggard and old before his time.

George Triscott was at a loss to understand his impatience to get his discharge; telling him he had written about it, although he thought it a pity so good a sailor should leave the service, but he could not see what difference a few days one way or the other could make.

William Fox was an honest, open-hearted fellow, but he could not bring himself to speak to the lieutenant of the secret that had destroyed his present and future happiness. He said "He had business which rendered his leaving the country a necessity, and the sooner the better."

A month passed; yet, although he had obtained an extension of leave through George's influence, the anxiously expected paper never arrived. At the expiration of that period several guests arrived at Tristillian, Captain Hemmings among the number; for, the leaf now being well off the trees, the big shoots were about to commence.

The commander did not appear particularly pleased at again encountering his former subordinate. Whether it was a reminiscence of a conversation with Laura some few months ago on the banks of the Tavy, or whether it was caused by an old dislike which Fox had experienced to his cost aboard the *Raven*, this much is certain, that his face showed distinctly a shade of annoyance as he greeted the former quartermaster of that ship rather sharply.

"Well, Fox, what are you doing here? Time you were at sea again; your leave must be up long ago."

The blue-jacket answered his officer respectfully, from old habits of discipline, "that he was anxiously awaiting his discharge."

Hemmings' face softened a little as he replied, more kindly :

"I think you are making a great mistake. A man with your education would be sure to get on; you would probably soon become a warrant-officer. You should think better of it before it is too late. In fact, as Mr. Triscott spoke well to me of your recent conduct on board the *Raven*, I should be glad to help you if you felt inclined to change your mind. The *Hesperus* is now commissioning, and I think, as the captain is a friend of mine, I could get you a berth on board her as gunner. If I remember right, you were gunner's mate when you were unfortunately reduced."

Well did Fox remember that fact also, and that the very officer speaking to him had been the cause of his reduction on the occasion referred to. In spite of this, the apparent kindness of the intention touched him, and to a thorough seaman—as he was—the prospect of obtaining the responsible post of gunner in a smart ship was by no means an unpleasant one. He remembered that if his discharge did not arrive very shortly he would be forced to rejoin, and in his old inferior capacity of quartermaster.

"Thank you very much, sir," he answered, "for your kindness. If I have not obtained my discharge parchment in a day or two, I shall be very much obliged if you still feel inclined to interest yourself in me."

Little did Fox know that it was Captain Hemmings himself who had been, either accidentally or intentionally, the direct cause that that paper had not long ago reached his hands. And yet such was the case. After an absence of about ten days, Captain Hemmings had been called to take over, on his return to Devonport, temporary command of the guardship, on the books of which William Fox's name

was borne, while not belonging to a ship. While thus employed, the application for discharge came in among some others for his signature, but was for some reason "pigeonholed" by him, no doubt for further reference—and forgotten!

Captain Hemmings had been relieved from this duty at the expiration of a few days, when he again went away, this time on prolonged leave of absence, which his high connections at the Admiralty facilitated his obtaining. When further applications for William's discharge came in, reference should of course have been made to the original one, which was not forthcoming. Now "red-tape" is quite as strong a power in the navy as in other Government services. It would therefore have been highly improper and out of routine for any steps to be taken in the matter until the production of the original document; as this was not to be found, William's chance of being in a short time once more at sea was far greater than he expected when thanking the commander for his supposed kindness. Speaking afterwards to George, Hemmings remarked:

"You should not really keep that man Fox about here any longer, or encourage the idea he has of leaving the service. From what you tell me of the man, I have a much better opinion of him than I had formerly. He is a well-spoken fellow, and would make a good warrant-officer. I can get him a billet as gunner, if you do as I think you should, and persuade him to take advantage of some hitch he mentions in getting his discharge. It is simply absurd to think of a man like him, who has been so long at sea, turning farmer."

George wondered at this somewhat sudden interest in Fox, whom Hemmings had never before had a good word

for; but he agreed in all he said, and promised to speak to the man again in the course of the next day or two. Before he did so, however, another and more important conversation took place between the commander and Fox. The latter was accompanying the gentlemen out shooting one day, when he heard Captain Hemmings telling one of the party that he had been in Paris for some weeks lately, and enlarging on the different places of amusement he had been at while there. The thought instantly struck William, whose heart beat fast at the very first mention of the name Paris: "Perhaps he may have seen Laura while there. He might have seen her at one of those theatres."

After thinking the matter over calmly he determined to ask the question. Taking advantage, therefore, of the opportunity when Hemmings was alone to address him, he asked if he might be allowed a word with him in private. The commander, imagining that it bore reference to the appointment as gunner, readily granted the request.

William commenced at once, without any beating about the bush:

"I think, sir, you know a young woman of the name of Laura Luscombe; she told me she had seen you occasionally fishing at Denham Bridge."

Hemmings was not a man easily taken aback, but he certainly seemed to be so at this moment, as, pausing a second, he replied, in a voice full of suppressed passion:

"What the devil do you mean, sir, by this impertinence? What should I know of Laura Luscombe?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, you misunderstood me, I mean no impertinence," said Fox; "but knowing you to have been in Paris recently, where she is supposed to be, I thought you might possibly have seen her, that's all."

"I don't understand you at all," said the commander, trying to suppress the anger his voice betrayed, but still white with rage—or was it anxiety? "Explain yourself."

"Well, sir, you see the young lady I mentioned disappeared from her home some little time ago. Her father is one of my oldest friends, and is in the greatest distress; he is most anxious to have some tidings of her, and if possible induce her to return home."

William stopped for a moment, with a face now nearly as white as Hemmings', as if unable to utter the next few words. Wiping his brow with his handkerchief, he hurried on:

"She was seduced from her home by Mr. Treleaven. He is abroad with her now—in Paris. I thought it possible you might have seen one or other of them there, and would be able perhaps to give me some information. I was thinking of going over to try to bring her back to her wretched parents."

Hemmings' face had cleared considerably as poor Fox jerked out these sentences, and he was his quiet, self-possessed self again as he answered:

"A most laudable intention, truly. I most certainly did see Mr. Treleaven one day in Paris, but not the young woman you speak of. Ah, yes; I recollect now, he did tell me he was travelling with a lady. All the information I can give you about the matter is that he told me he was going to Italy, and then on into Egypt. I am afraid yours would indeed be a wild-goose chase, and that you would only waste your time and money for nothing. Supposing you do find her, which is highly improbable, are you certain she will return with you—a young lady who voluntarily leaves her father's roof in the way you describe—just because you choose to follow and ask her to do so?"

"Yes, sir," said William, "but——"

But Hemmings would not be interrupted, and went on:

"Again, there is another possibility to be entered on, namely, that of her being his wife. From the little I know of Miss Luscombe, and from what you tell me yourself of her, I feel quite confident that this must be the case. She was a very lady-like girl, quite good enough for that young coxcomb, Mr. Treleaven. Think then what a fool you would make of yourself by following her!"

Fox had never looked at it in this light before; but, now it was put before him, he wondered he had not. From this moment he began to give up all his plans of pursuit; he knew there was truth enough in all Captain Hemmings had said. That even supposing he got his discharge immediately, and found Laura, what chance was there of his being able to persuade her to return home? Almost none. To force her to do so, he now felt in his calmer moments, would be impossible. His spirit was broken. Laura was under any circumstances lost to him for ever, and the best thing he could do was to try to drown care and sorrow in hard work.

"I am sorry for you, Fox," said Hemmings, who had been watching him narrowly as he meditated heavily over these things, "if you are interested in the girl. A thing of this sort must be very distressing, and it is better to try to forget it if no good can be done. Excuse me if I did not understand you just now when you began to speak. I had, I will own, heard something of the young lady's disappearance, and was naturally rather astonished at your asking me about her. Plenty of work is the best thing for you, as I told you a few days since; I shall be glad to help you, and if you like, although now rather late, I will still

try and get the billet I promised. If I succeed, while the ship is fitting out you will have no time to think, and once at sea you will, as gunner, have lots of work to look after. What do you say, Fox? Shall I write to the captain of the *Hesperus?*"

"Yes, sir, if you will be so kind; some active employment will be the best thing for me," said Fox, dejectedly. "I believe I should only make matters worse by going to look for her; it makes me easier in my mind to think that he has perhaps made her his wife. My poor little Laura! God send her happiness!"

And so it came to pass that about a week after this William Fox was at work in Devonport Dockyard, employed in the fitting out of the ship on which Captain Hemmings' interest had provided him the berth of gunner. He considered himself most highly indebted to that officer, and felt that he had given him excellent advice. A lonely man he must always be; since Laura was lost to him, he had no object in life, and no one to make or lay by money for.

But still, it would have been contrary to his nature to take to a life of idleness and inaction. If there was no permanent solace for his grief in hard work, it brought at least temporary forgetfulness. The idea that Laura was married had become a conviction, and he wrote to the old miller to take comfort—that his daughter could not be anything else than an honest woman and a virtuous wife.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SUMMER-HOUSE.

THE days passed pleasantly enough for Hemmings at Tristillian. Plenty of pheasants to shoot by day, varied by occasional "partridge drives," and plenty of pleasant women to talk to of an evening—such was the programme, and one that suits most young Englishmen very well.

The commander was also a "bit of a lion" among the people whom he now met for the first time, for, although the ill-effects of his wound had quite worn off, the remembrance of the slave affair in which he had received it was still fresh in the memories of the country-folk, who had seen stirring representations of it in the picture-papers at the time. All the Triscotts' friends likewise knew that he and George had been under fire together.

He contrived to make himself so agreeable to the ladies that when, twice during his stay, he was obliged to go away on "important business" from Saturday to Monday, he was quite missed. With the men in the house he was not so popular; he did not trouble himself to be so agreeable to them, content to be *facile princeps* with the opposite sex.

Some of the gentlemen staying with the Trefrys slightly resented this popularity with the ladies, but more par-

ticularly Hemmings' tones of superiority with themselves. One of the malcontents indeed went so far as to attempt to disparage him to Miss Trefry, and to remark, with a sneer, "That it was a peculiar thing that Captain Hemmings' 'important business' should always take him away on a Sunday."

This young gentleman, however, who was only the son of a country squire, and had never boarded a slaver, or otherwise distinguished himself, was promptly snubbed by the daughter of his host. After that, if Hemmings was unfavourably spoken of, it was not in the presence of the ladies.

Ada continued to be very amiable to him, but she had quite dropped that flighty manner she had adopted just before leaving Stoke. She was graver and quieter than of old, but, in Hemmings' eyes, none the less bewitching for that. Her beauty was as remarkable in morning-dress, when with her cousin out in the woods to lunch with the shooters, as when faultlessly attired in evening costume; although certainly, on the latter occasions, the charms of her round white arms and snowy neck were an additional beauty to her graceful figure.

Hemmings seemed to become more entranced with her every day. He was always by her side, paying her the thousand little attentions which a man with plenty of *savoir faire* can render without making himself obtrusive. Ada accepted this homage as evidence of friendliness towards her on his part, but would not recognise in it anything more, although a secret feeling, which she tried hard not to admit, soon told her that Captain Hemmings wished to be regarded by her as something more than a friend. No new attachment could find place in her heart,

but as a friend she liked Hemmings, and it would have grieved her to pain him in any way. She therefore weakly permitted his attentions, being too soft-hearted to repel them, or put him down in any way. Jack's image was always before her, try as she would to banish it and to persuade herself that she had forgotten all about him. All day long she laughed and talked gaily, taking part in every amusement, and never allowing herself to think for a moment; but at night the recollection of happy days gone by haunted her, keeping her awake for hours, until her brain ached with thinking, and with anger at herself for thinking still of one so base and heartless.

One night, while thus lying awake hour after hour, her thoughts turned to Nellie Watson. She remembered the picnic, and how she had overheard Jack proposing to Nellie; that had been the first blow to her happiness, but it was nothing to what she had suffered since. Poor Nellie! she had parted coldly from her, at the close of that miserable day; but "a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind," and she now pitied her for having been befooled by Jack, who had certainly pretended to love her also. Ada regretted having been so frigid to Nellie, and determined to make it up when next they met. There was a bond of union between them, for had not both been equally unfortunate in mistaking for real gold what was the merest dross? On their return to Penallyn in the winter she would ask her uncle to invite Nellie and her sister there. George would like it, too, for he used to swear "there was no girl like Nellie Watson." It was true he seemed just now to be a good deal taken up with his cousin Rose; but then—he was always in love with some one, and not at all averse to changing backwards and

forwards with change of place. He was a regular sailor in that respect, and seemed to find nothing so charming as variety.

But to return to the present. Hemmings was constantly with her, and, unacknowledged even to her own heart, it soothed her wounded pride to find another man only too willing to pick up what Jack had so ruthlessly cast away. Rose took every opportunity to give them as much of one another's society as possible, for she thought the more she saw of another man the less her cousin would be disposed to dwell on her late *désillusion*. Miss Trefry was also a woman of the world, and thought it would not be at all a bad thing for Ada to marry Captain Hemmings. She knew him to be well-off and well-connected, what more could any one desire? Ada must get over that fancy for Jack Treleaven. And Rose wondered vaguely what would become of him, now he had put himself outside the pale of society, in that part of the world at least.

It therefore came about that at lunch-time in the coverts, when the ladies stayed to see a little of the shooting, or when on off-days there were excursions to any of the places of interest round about, it was invariably to Hemmings' charge that Ada fell. He was not ungrateful to Miss Trefry, and made the best of the opportunities she gave him, but still he was not sure of Ada.

The commander's stay at Tristillian was drawing very near its close, when a day was fixed for shooting the "home coverts." This was to be the great day of the season, and, although the number of pheasants to be slain would not have appeared great to a man only accustomed to Norfolk battue-shooting, it was something considerable; for, in addition to the birds whose usual habitat was in

the coverts all round the Hall, many more, and hares* also, must have drawn in after the shooting outside, in the large woods and the plantations farther away.

The coverts to be shot to-day were the "North" and "Alma" plantations immediately at the back of the Hall; the "North Grove" farther away still, and the "Long" plantation. This latter, stretching southwards from the "Alma," swept past the front of the Hall, being there intersected by a carriage-drive, and then on for about half a mile down into the little village. This long plantation was traversed throughout its whole length by a gravel walk, which was a favourite place of exercise for the inhabitants of Tristillian in winter or summer. In the former season it was sheltered from the blast by the tall trees, which shaded it from the heat in summer also.

In this plantation, about three parts of the way down to the village, was an old thatched oak summer-house situated on the borders of a pond. But this summer-house requires a little more description before we proceed further with the events of the day. It was built on a slight elevation above the pond, and shaded on three sides by tall ash and fir trees; the fourth side was a large doorway, through which the sun shone from the opening among the trees above the water, and whence in summer one might watch the great pike lazily splashing about among the water-lilies that swayed gently to and fro with every breath of air.

The path from the village to the Hall ran close beside it, winding round on the far side of the pond, through a regular forest of larches, which pushed their pale green

* This was written before the Ground Game Act came into force. *There were* hares in those days, and in plenty. But, alas! there was only one hare killed at Tristillian in the last big shoot in 1889.

foliage up through the rarer forest trees. Owing to these larches, and the little eminence on which the rustic house stood, a person advancing along the gravel walk would neither observe nor be observed by the occupants until close to the entrance, when the sound of his step on the gravel might probably give sufficient warning to prevent indiscreet intrusion.

It was indeed quite possible to pass the summer-house without noticing that it was occupied or not, the entrance being slightly turned away from the path and facing a little grassy peninsula which ran out into the water. At the extreme end of the little peninsula a weeping willow dipped its long pliant boughs into the glassy depths below. It was a pleasant spot at all times of the year, and one in which either old or young might easily while away an hour with a book, a companion, or solitary thoughts. The cooing of the wood-pigeons, or their frightened flapping, as, disturbed from their retreat in the big ash, they wheeled across the pond; the harsh note of a water-hen swimming leisurely along in little jerks; the squirrels chasing each other up and down the trees, or playing together on the peninsula; a hare cantering slowly up the path to the edge of the pond, and then perchance turning frightened away, scattering the gravel in its headlong flight—these, and many similar woodland scenes, might well afford interest by the hour together to the lover of nature.

On the day of the shooting, the "North Grove," which it may be remembered was that farthest away, and which covered the largest acreage, was the covert first shot by the gentlemen. This occupied them until lunch-time; and, with the arrival of lunch, arrived also the ladies upon the scene. After luncheon—which was comfortably served

upon the clean straw of a barn, known as the "blue barn," on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle because it was white—the guns surrounded the "North" plantation. Here the hot corner was made at the corner of the farmyard, a very convenient place for the ladies, who, without wading through the mud, could from their comfortable seats upon the straw see all the sport through the large open barn doors, while they were at the same time quite safe from the guns.

As the guns all drew down the sides of the covert to the corner, it was easy to see that two of the gentlemen were shooting very jealous of one another, both shooting at the same birds, and deliberately taking each other's shots. These were the young squire before mentioned and Captain Hemmings. This young gentleman had been nettled by some little remark about his retriever made by the other, and, in retaliation, had—they being both on the same side of the "North" plantation—commenced shooting at his birds and hares before they reached him, firing across Hemmings in the most unwarrantable manner. But two can play at that game; and Hemmings, being rather the quicker shot of the two, was getting the best of it, while both were getting exasperated.

As they approached the corner, the head keeper—who did not like seeing his birds mutilated by receiving two barrels instead of one, or else easy shots missed clean, from the mutual anxiety of the jealous pair—ventured to address a slight remonstrance to "the Cappen."

"Quite right," said Hemmings, in a very sarcastic tone, which, as there was just then a momentary lull in the firing, reached the ladies where they sat. "Quite right," he repeated, quietly, putting his gun under his arm; "I think

we'll just let Mr. Stone"—the gentleman aforesaid—"have two shots at everything first, and then see what we can do for him; then there need be no more dispute as to whose bird it is!"

Mr. Stone was maddened by this calm sarcasm. A cock pheasant got up. Barely giving it time to clear the boughs, he discharged both barrels at it in quick succession; knowing that the ladies' eyes were upon him, he missed clean with both.

"Now then, Stone, let me see if I can't help you with that bird," said Captain Hemmings; and, taking his gun deliberately from under his arm, he bowled the bird over as it was sailing away unscathed over the barn. It fell on the roof, and, bounding off, dropped in front of the open door at the ladies' feet.

"Bravo! Captain Hemmings," cried Ada, clapping her hands; and a murmur of approval went round, for nothing succeeds with the fair sex like success.

This was one of the last shots fired at this covert, and Mr. Stone, who was a victim to Ada's charms, ground his teeth with rage at seeing a couple of the tail feathers of the bird gracing her hat before they left for the "Alma" plantation, which was next shot; and then came the "Long" plantation, the one in which the summer-house stood. This last was beaten up to the carriage-drive, which, it may be remembered, intersected it, and then the top part was driven down to the same place. Ada was standing on the drive with Hemmings when, at the very end of the proceedings, another slight misunderstanding took place between that gentleman and Mr. Stone. A hare crossed the road—they both fired at it, and it rolled over into the bushes on the other side.

"That's my hare!" cried Stone, "my hare!"

"Then, if it's your hare, you'd better send that excellent retriever of yours, whose points we were discussing this morning, to fetch it," replied Hemmings. "I fancy he'll have his work cut out for him;" for he had seen the hare, after lying motionless for a moment or so, pick itself up and run away down the "Long" plantation.

Mr. Stone's dog hit off the trail pretty well at first, but the wounded hare had evidently more strength than they thought, for, although the dog followed it half-way down to the summer-house, it was not to be found, and then the dog came to a check in a marshy spot. The shooting was over, and Hemmings strolled down the pathway, accompanied by Ada, in order to watch the dog's performances, whose powers of nose he had maligned in the morning. He had borrowed the keeper's retriever, an excellent animal, and led him in a thong. Stone's dog being at fault, Hemmings considerately remarking, "There! I told you he had no nose," loosed the retriever he held in leash, saying:

"Now we'll decide whose hare it is, by whose dog finds him."

But Mr. Stone was still in a state of irritation, possibly increased by the sight of the feathers, which nodded mockingly at him from Ada's hat, reminding him of how beautifully Hemmings had "wiped his eye" in the morning.

"You can't expect my dog to hunt if you let that brute loose with him," said he, with a scowl. "I'd rather give up my hare than have my dog spoiled by that good-for-nothing beast;" and, whistling to his retriever, he strode angrily away; Hemmings saying, as he departed:

"We'll send your hare after you by the 'good-for-nothing beast,' in a minute or two."

He was soon enabled to redeem his promise, for the hare was retrieved near the back of the summer-house, where it was found lying, having expired in the effort to jump a little ditch, through which a rippling streamlet ran into the pond. The keeper's dog was despatched up the pathway to his master with the hare; and let us hope that Mr. Stone, whom the "good-for-nothing beast" passed upon the road with its load, felt satisfied as he saw it that it was indeed *his* hare. This is the more important as, being the last appearance of Mr. Stone in this, or, as far as we know, in any other story, we should like to leave that gentleman in a good humour.

Ada and Hemmings strolled into the summer-house, and, sitting down on the oak bench, they commenced deciphering a Latin inscription carved deep in the panel of the wall.

"Now, Captain Hemmings," said Ada, merrily, "I hope you are a good Latin scholar? I have set my heart upon knowing the literal translation of this inscription, which was carved by my grandfather in memory of his grandfather, I believe."

To make it out, they both had to stand up, and to stand pretty close together. The entire centre of the summer-house was filled up by an octagonal oak table, standing on one stout leg, so that it resembled a gigantic mushroom. The evening was closing in, and they found it necessary to place themselves between this table and the wall, to read the inscription which directly faced the entrance. Kneeling on the bench, they could just make out the words.

Hemmings had taken Ada's hand by way of helping her on to the bench, and held it tight in his own, notwithstand-

ing an ineffectual attempt on her part to withdraw it. Protesting that he knew more about rope-ends than Latin, he read out the inscription as follows:

"*In memoriam avi necnon amici*
Hoc tectum nestoravit
Gulielmus M. R. Trefry.
An. Dom. 1855."

"I don't think it's good Latin," said Hemmings, with a puzzled and comical expression.

"I'm afraid you mean that it's too good for you, Captain Hemmings, for that's the way everybody commences to translate it, and I never yet have learnt its real meaning. It is a bad sign to hear you begin by saying: 'It's not good Latin.' But I insist upon your translating it somehow, good or bad;" and Ada, who was blushing a little from the consciousness that he was still holding her hand, laughed, and again tried to draw away her hand.

Hemmings felt all his blood tingle in his veins, as he gazed into that face, with its perfection of ripe young beauty, and he quite forgot the inscription on the wall, until reminded by Ada.

"Go on, sir! 'In memoriam.'"

"Yes, 'in memoriam,' that means 'in memory of,' I'm certain of that," said he.

"Of course! Why, a girl could tell you that—but go on to the next word, 'avi.'"

"Avi! avi! I don't quite know what an avi is—unless it—I think it means 'my uncle,' that is to say, a pawnbroker, I suppose! But why on earth, Miss Triscott, did your grandfather erect a summer-house in memory of a pawnbroker? It is true, they are a very useful and intelligent body of men, like the metropolitan police force."

"What a tease you are! Dear, dear! it is too ridiculous! A pawnbroker, indeed! Why, I told you it was his grandfather. I certainly do not think the commander of the *Adelaide* shines in Latin;" and Ada laughed more heartily than she had done for many a day past. "Now, go on!" she said, "next word?"

"'Necnon amici,'—'none the less a friend.' Really, Miss Triscott, you are mistaken about its being his grandfather. It must have been the pawnbroker, after all, for you see, he was none the less a friend—that is to say, he turned up trumps at the right time, excellent man! whatever his exact relationship, so don't let us inquire too closely. Let us concede he was a relation and a friend—I don't think I'm equal to going on with his history any further to-night, though." Then changing his tone of light banter for one of much more serious import, so suddenly as to startle Ada, he continued: "And now, Miss Triscott, I want to speak to you on an important subject. I want to ask you if you will become *my* 'relation and friend.' Yes! my closest relation and dearest friend for life. Do you understand, Ada?"

There was a magnetic spell in his glance, a mesmeric power, that prevented her from moving, and withal a pleading, earnest look that moved her. Frightened though she was, she understood well enough that he was asking her to be his wife. Oh, memory of Jack! What was she to say or do? It all flashed through her mind in a second—she felt she still loved Jack. No! She could not marry this man—much as she liked him, much as George and everybody else liked him, and thought of him—how could she? She still loved Jack! Thus ran the current of her thoughts, but all she found it in her power to say was:

"Oh, Captain Hemmings!"

"Yes, Ada," he continued, "you are perhaps surprised at the suddenness with which I ask you to be my wife. But I assure you it is no sudden fancy, no frenzy of the moment that prompts me—I always liked you much. During the month I have been here, there has not been a single day in which I have not thought of you from morning until night—not a day in which I have not lived upon your looks and actions. I know, for I have watched you so carefully, that you have had some sorrow hanging over you, which has changed you from your former self; I have, if you will excuse my saying so, had a very shrewd idea in what that sorrow consisted, and that it related in some manner to a man in every way unworthy of the confidence which you placed in him, and who has proved his unworthiness by his actions. Will you let that man stand between me and you? Why should you, after the way in which he has behaved? Oh, say that you will not, and that you will be my wife, for I love you very deeply. Can you not love me in return, and give me the promise I ask for?"

Ada was silent. He waited for an answer. At last she said, calmly and deliberately:

"Captain Hemmings, I thank you for your kindness. I appreciate the honour you do me very much; but, before I reply, I must ask you one question—I feel convinced you will answer me truthfully. Is it true that Mr. Treleaven committed the action that everybody says he did?"

She was deathly pale as she spoke. Hemmings did not hesitate a moment ere he replied:

"There can be no doubt about it."

"Then," said she, distinctly, "I will be your wife."

He leaned over and kissed her. At this moment a

shadow crossed the threshold of the door, and a voice behind them cried out, in well-known tones :

"Good heavens, Ada, what are you doing with that man?"

She turned with a scream:

"Jack—Mr. Treleaven!"

Hemmings also turned and said, with perfect composure :

"You'll excuse me, Mr. Treleaven, but your presence at this moment is an intrusion. The lady you address in such familiar tones is my affianced wife."

"Ada," said Jack, "is this—can this be true?" And a wild look of rage and despair was in his eyes.

Ada had recovered her presence of mind and her dignity. She remembered the crime Jack had been guilty of, and remembered what she had suffered at his hands. This nerved her with courage to speak. When she did so, although she was trembling all over, there was no sound of tremor in her voice, no hesitation in the words that issued from her blanched lips. Drawing herself up to her full height, and coming round the table so that, in the waning twilight of the December evening, she could distinctly see those well-known and once dearly-loved features, she confronted him.

"Jack Treleaven," she said, "I wonder you are not ashamed to speak to me. Yes, it is true. I am Captain Hemming's affianced wife."

"Oh," said Jack, putting on his most unconcerned drawl, "I am sure I am most delighted to hear the good news. I congratulate you, Miss Triscott, upon having obtained such an excellent *parti*, and such a thoroughly straightforward man as a husband. And you, Captain Hemmings, I must not leave without giving you my warmest

congratulations upon"—and here he drawled out and emphasized the words in the most insulting manner—"upon being the most unmitigated scoundrel unhung."

And, turning, he walked quietly down the path, whistling as he went: "The girl I left behind me."

Poor Ada! her courage was all very well for the moment while her virtuous indignation served to maintain it; but now, as she saw the so recently found Jack retreating as rapidly as he had appeared, she felt as if she had indeed made a mess of the whole thing. Oh, why had he not appeared five minutes sooner? Then she might have asked him everything. But still, was not Captain Hemmings the very soul of honour, and the man into whose keeping she had voluntarily resigned her whole future? He surely would not have told her what was not certain! Jack must be indeed the villain she had heard he was. But still, how handsome he looked! How reproachful was the glance in his clear, blue eyes ere he turned away in bitter sarcasm!

Altogether, on their walk home, Captain Hemmings did not have the most pleasant companion in his affianced bride. But he also had something to think about which perhaps prevented him from noticing Ada's preoccupation —Jack's crushing insult to himself. Why had he not sprung at his throat and avenged it on the spot? The fact was it had come too suddenly upon him, and Treleaven was gone before he had had time to collect himself.

Well, now we will leave them to make the best of their engagement, and to enjoy the few remaining days they were to have in each other's society at Tristillian. There are others whom we have long neglected, and whom it behoves us now to chronicle.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHERE JACK WENT.

WE must now trace the movements of our hero, since we left him nearly six weeks ago, after the successful capture of the salmon. This feat, if it had redounded to his credit as a fisherman, had also helped considerably to lend colour to the report of his having taken Laura Luscombe away from her home. But we hope that whatever rumours many-mouthed scandal had circulated to that effect, to the detriment of his character for morality, none of our readers have for a single instant had any doubt of his innocence in the matter.

Poor Jack! the stars in their courses seemed to have fought against him. On the evening after the exploit, just as he was sitting down to mess, a telegram was handed to him. It was from his only sister, who was with their mother in London. It ran as follows:

"Uncle Charles very ill in Paris. Has wired for us both. Come up by Dutchman to-morrow. Will meet you at Paddington."

Sir Charles Treleaven—the uncle in question—had been a diplomatist all his life, and, consequently, had lived

a good deal abroad. There had never been any thought of Jack's succeeding to the title until rather more than a year previously, when both his cousins had been drowned while boating on the Lake of Geneva.

The solitary and heart-broken father (he had been a widower for many years) had come to England, where he had received every consolation it was in the power of his sister-in-law, Mrs. Treleaven, and of his nephew and niece to afford him under the weight of his heavy calamity. To Jack, as his heir, and to his niece, the old man now naturally turned in his illness—a very painful and dangerous one, with which he had been seized as he was going out to take up once more his duties as British Ambassador in Rome.

Jack started immediately, joined his sister in London, and both crossed by the same night's tidal boat from Folkestone.

It was on his way up to town, and as his train was waiting for a few minutes at Newton Abbot junction, that Jack to his surprise saw Laura Luscombe standing on the opposite platform. As he crossed the line to speak to her, the train he was going on by came into the station. He put her into a carriage, and entering it after her passed out at the opposite door, which, as the platform runs close up to both sides of the here single lines, he could easily do. He had barely time to speak to her, and catch his own train on the other side ere it started; while the one by which Laura was travelling left the station simultaneously.

Jack had been seen to enter the train with Laura, and not to emerge thence; the lady who had seen him, and had brought the news to Horrabridge, never dreamed of his going through and out at the other side. Therefore, when she had said she had seen them both with her own eyes go

off together, she stated what she thought was strictly true. This, however, was one of those occasions upon which she would have done well to have remembered the old proverb, "Believe only half what you see," etc.

Unfortunately for Jack, it never crossed her mind; consequently, his character was damned. In any case, his disappearing on the same day as Laura Luscombe would have looked suspicious, while such conclusive evidence as this would have been enough to convince even an Irish jury.

It may be remembered that after the salmon episode Jack Treleaven had intended going out to explain matters to Miss Watson on the very day he was compelled to leave. He did not care to write about it, for it was too long a story altogether, and unnecessary writing was a thing he hated. He resolved to tell "Bung" the whole yarn, with strict instructions to repeat it to Nellie Watson word for word.

Unluckily "Bung" was not at mess that evening, so Jack proceeded to his quarters. After kicking three or four times at the door of Lifton's room, he suddenly remembered that his chum had said something to him about going away on two days' leave for rabbit-shooting. Of course "Bung" was gone, confound him! He never was there when he was wanted! Well! it could not be helped, Nellie must wait for his explanation; and Jack soon forgot the whole thing in the bustle of departure.

So it was that Nellie Watson never heard the true version of Jack's sudden disappearance. When "Bung" returned next evening, he was told that Jack had received a telegram on important business; had immediately applied for leave, and gone off.

This, then, was all he was in his turn able to communicate to Miss Watson. When, a few days afterwards,

in spite of her indignation against Jack, she asked, perhaps in the hope of hearing him cleared, "What was the cause of his departure?"—truly it was but an unsatisfying and unsatisfactory reply that she received. On hearing it she said, with a regular sniff of indignation:

"Humph! A pretty sort of story, that! Important business, indeed! Well, he's a bigger fool than I took him for if he could not have invented something better than that!—if he has got no respect for his own good name, he might have some for his friends. How am I to go on lying about him—as I have been doing freely—unless I know what excuse he intends to make for himself when he comes back?—if he ever does! As it is, every one knows I'm lying. I don't care twopence for what he has done, but I think he is thoroughly mean to have no respect for his friends' characters." And as Nellie stamped her foot with rage, nearly on Lifton's toe, he observed her eyes glistening with tears of indignation, or some other mixture of feelings which he was not able to understand.

In good sooth, this honest girl and staunch friend had indeed been, as she herself expressed it, "lying freely," in defence of the absent one; although in her own heart she could not for one moment doubt but that he was as black as everybody painted him.

People soon found out that it was not, as some of them had supposed, the way to please her to abuse her absent friend. She invented the most specious stories to account for his absence and the fact of his having been seen with Laura at Newton Abbot, and told them with the most unblushing effrontery; brow-beating his maligners so that, if men, they were too polite to contradict her, and, if women, she quite cowed them into silence.

CHAPTER XV.

NELLIE'S PICTURE.

CAPTAIN LIFTON had got into the habit of coming out to Horrabridge pretty frequently, as, since Jack had gone, without his chum he found time hang heavily enough on his hands in Plymouth.

He had received one short note from Jack a week or so after he left, giving no fixed address. Thus Lifton had no means of ascertaining the truth or falsehood of what common report said concerning him. Captain Lifton was therefore as much exercised in his mind as any one else about the matter. It is true that he seemed to take it all very quietly; and it has been confidentially asserted that he drank more glasses of beer during this period than at any previous or subsequent epoch of his career. However, although appearances were so much against his friend, "Bung" reflected that on the whole it was quite possible he might be blameless in the matter, and with the more reason, as he had always been confidant and adviser to Treleaven in his numerous scrapes or love affairs.

"It was highly improbable," thought "Bung," as he sat by an empty beer-glass, "that Jack would not have consulted me also in this running away business. At least," mused the worthy captain, "if he had not consulted me, I

think he would have told me if he intended carrying the girl off, and that, too, in spite of the advice he might have expected to get from me on the subject. No! I don't think Jack can have done it!" and so Captain Lifton settled the matter in his own mind, troubling his head no more about it, and applying himself more diligently than ever to his painting.

About this time there was to be a local art exhibition in Plymouth, to be concluded with an auction of the pictures, for which both he and the two Miss Watsons had agreed to prepare pictures; so there was plenty to be done in filling in the detail of two or three moorland scenes he had commenced. As the weather was now too rough for out-of-door sketching, he kept his painting things at the Moor Lodge and worked there, the three amateurs giving and taking advice from each other about their respective pictures.

At this time, however, Nellie became a most unpleasant companion to work with. She was as fractious as a little child, and Lifton soon got heartily tired of her tempers, for peace and quiet he prized above all things. He began to think that the clever and handsome Miss Watson really was becoming sour and old-maidish. Her beautiful eyes had lost their bright penetrating expression, looking dull and heavy, or else blazing into sudden anger for some trifling cause; and "Bung," no judge of human nature, wondered at the change, and turned with greater admiration than ever to the sweet and gentle Mollie, who was as usual always ready with a pleasant laugh or jest as she plodded away at her work.

Nellie and Lifton, in addition to two or three smaller paintings which were finished, were working at two com-

panion pictures. The sketches each had taken of Dartmoor, from the summit of the Sheep Tor, formed the basis of their work. Nellie, in spite of her bad temper, got on well with her picture, as what she lost one day she made up the next. Lifton's also was likely to be a success, and Nellie appeared anxious, more on his account than her own, to do her very best to make her companion picture a success also. She allowed herself, therefore, to be guided by his advice, which was always sound and to be relied upon, in the preparation of her work.

They had agreed that the pictures were not to be sold separately, but, whatever their respective merits might prove to be, they should be sold together, or not at all, and they were to go shares in the earnings. The pictures, they calculated, should fetch seven or eight pounds apiece; but they had determined to take nothing less than five; Nellie declaring that that was the very lowest price at which she would consent to permit her work to be criticised "by an ignorant and unappreciative public."

All went well until about ten days before the exhibition was to open. The pictures were done all but a few finishing touches, when one day Captain Lifton, at her request, criticised Nellie's work thoroughly. He was well pleased with it, as a whole, but made some slightly unfavourable remarks upon the foreground.

Now this happened to be one of Miss Watson's bad days, for some kind friend had written, making unpleasant remarks to her on her friendship with Mr. Treleaven. She had managed to bottle up her wrath all the morning, and to control her fiery temper; but Nellie's temper was a demon unused to contradiction, and, once excited, ready at a touch to burst forth.

Captain Lifton's good-natured criticism was the spark to the gunpowder. The blood rushed to her face, and then ebbed back again, leaving it pale and composed but for the ominous quivering at the corners of her mouth.

"Oh, very well, Captain Lifton; of course, if you wish it, I'll alter that foreground. I can do it best upstairs!" So saying, she snatched the picture from the easel, and—swinging it about in a way that made Mollie cry out in an agony, "For heaven's sake, Nellie, take care! You'll knock a hole in it!"—left the room.

But Mollie need not have been so anxious; in a few minutes her sister reappeared with the picture. Walking up to where she and Lifton sat side by side at work, she laid it before them saying:

"There! I've altered it—do you think it an improvement?"

And then—as she watched their faces of horror and astonishment, and listened to their exclamations of disgust and surprise—the strange girl seemed quite to recover her good-humour, and, putting her hands to her sides, broke into a fit of uncontrollable laughter. And now what had she done? She had washed out the whole foreground; not a vestige of it remained. Where it had been was now a ridiculous outline, in blue paint, of a little dog begging, with a pipe in his mouth! Oh, horror!

Poor "Bung" was too disgusted to speak. It was utterly spoiled now — good-bye to the exhibition, he thought, and he turned to the window to hide the expression he feared his face would give of his outraged feelings. But Mollie for once lost her temper. She abused her sister as she had never done before in her life. She reproached her for her ingratitude to Captain Lifton, whose

labour was now all thrown away. But, as Nellie only went on laughing, Mollie, who just then gave another look at the little dog, found the droll expression on his face so irresistibly funny that she was forced to give up scolding and join in her sister's laughter; calling out to "Bung":

"Oh! Captain Lifton! You must look at the 'foreground's' face—it's too good!"

"Bung" glanced at it, and, in spite of his vexation, the little dog was too much for him also. It was useless his trying to look solemn and angry—he too could do nothing but laugh.

When they had all laughed as much as they could, a reaction set in—they became very grave, and sat down and looked at one another. Nellie began to be very much ashamed of her childish passion; but she was not going to show it, and was putting on a look of rather over-done nonchalance, preparatory to making some flippant remark, when Lifton broke the silence. Taking up his hat, he said:

"I shall just have time to catch the three o'clock train —good afternoon," and he was gone; leaving his plates, palettes, and pictures to look after themselves. It was the best thing he could have done under the circumstances, words would have done no good; least said soonest mended, and he showed his sense in going.

It was unusual for Nellie to get the worst in a battle; but she could not help acknowledging to herself that Lifton had turned the tables upon her this time, and made her feel very small and mean. What a fool he must think her! Why, even kind, forgiving Mollie was silent and sorrowful, as she collected and put by the painting materials littered around. Nellie could bear it no longer;

seizing upon her miserable handiwork, she hurried with it to her own room, and did not issue thence that evening.

Later on, Mollie went to her door, but found it locked, so sent some tea upstairs to her undeserving sister, who had not, as she herself would have said, "the cheek" to ask for it. Mollie returned to her own painting, and worked at it until it was dark. Annoyed with her sister as she felt, and sorry as she was for what she knew must have been such a disappointment to Captain Lifton, it must be owned that Mollie—who was ever keenly alive to a sense of the ridiculous—found herself laughing, as she had often laughed before, at her sister's extraordinary conduct. Mollie, however, looked graver when she reflected on the cause that had given rise to it, for she knew Nellie too well not to be perfectly aware that it was something more than pique at Lifton's just criticism that made her spoil her own work, and render their friend's labour fruitless.

Mollie knew well that her sister had felt, and did feel keenly, the disgrace Jack Treleaven had brought upon his own good name. Whether her sister had any deeper interest in our hero's welfare than that of the friendship she had always professed for him, Mollie knew not; for Nellie's was not a character easily read by any one, not even by a sister. The recipient of many confidences, Nellie Watson rarely, if ever, made any to others.

Next day, Lifton received a letter of deep contrition from the fair offender. She begged of him to finish off and exhibit his own picture alone. She promised to try her best to replace the lost foreground in time, by working from morning till night; but, as it was most improbable she could do so, she could never feel he had forgiven her unless he consented to send his picture, in any case, to the exhibition. In a week's

time she would let him know if it was possible to have hers ready.

During that week, Nellie worked with locked doors. At the end of it, Mollie and Lifton were together admitted to her room. As they gazed upon the picture on the easel by the window, the disgust they had previously felt was changed to delight. It was the best picture Nellie had ever painted! A new foreground indeed existed—but what a foreground! There were two figures in it—admirable portraits—her own sister and Jack Treleaven, who, it may be remembered, had sat idly in the heather, while she and Lifton had sketched from the summit of Sheep Tor.

The two pictures were sold at the exhibition for fifty guineas. Jack's recent notoriety went for something in running up the price; while the many admirers of Mollie's beauty bid against each other. Thus for once good came out of evil.

CHAPTER XVI

"BUNG" IN LOVE.

THE success of her picture did not appear to give Nellie much satisfaction. She said she considered the price it had realised as a compliment more to Mollie, whose pretty face had caused it to sell so well, than to herself, and refused to accept the congratulations of her friends as due to herself in the matter.

If praise was deserved by any one, said she, it was deserved by Captain Lifton, who had "cowed her by his awful glance" into finishing her picture in time in spite of herself. She did not keep her twenty-five guineas long, saying, "That she was afraid if people knew she was such a 'catch,' they would be wanting to marry her for money, not for herself." She spent most of it in articles of wearing apparel, the greater part of which she presented to her sister. When Mollie protested against this generous extravagance, she was promptly told to "Shut up, as if she wanted the things again, she should take 'em."

Mollie knew this to be perfectly true, and accepted them, contented with the terms of presentation; as indeed most sisters would have been under similar circumstances. Mollie's pictures had also been a success. She too was high in her praise of Lifton, who, it was now evident, was not only him-

self a first-class artist, but well able to advise and instruct others. Mollie had indeed thanked him very prettily already, for the help he had given her in pointing out old faults, which had arisen from her being hitherto wholly self-taught; and for showing her how best to eradicate them.

"Bung" was covered with confusion, and positively blushed like a girl at her little speech. He modestly disclaimed having been of much use, but professed himself entirely at her service for the future, in so far as lay in his power.

Thenceforward Miss Mollie Watson and Captain Lifton became very firm friends. To please her, he even allowed himself to be initiated into the mysteries of the "trois-temps," for hitherto he had not been a very good performer in the terpsichorean art, and this, Mollie said, must be remedied! He proved a painstaking and apt pupil, and, at the next assembly ball, his fair instructress granted him three or four dances as the reward of progress.

The young subalterns, observing this, began to remark that the "old sign-painter" was going it; for they had had the impertinence to confer this new title upon Lifton, since he had come out so strongly in the artistic line. And indeed the "old sign-painter," as he sat in his quarters by himself after mess, began too to think that he was "going it." He wished he had Jack there to talk to about Mollie: only, of course, to ask him "if he did not think her a very charming and amiable young lady?" Questions of that kind were what he felt he would like to put to his "chum." He could picture to himself, though, the kind of grin to be expected on Mr. Jack's jovial face, on his discovering this sudden interest in a young lady.

He could imagine Jack "chaffing" him, and telling

him "that it was he now who was making an ass of himself;" with many other offensive remarks. All this Lifton felt quite prepared to put up with, if only he could have his "chum" there for half an hour, to talk to him of Mollie Watson. "Yes, Bung, old fellow, you're floored at last; you should never have gone in for the sign-painting trade, if you wished to preserve that weather-beaten, tough-as-leather old heart of yours in its normal condition; why, Bung, old man, it's no use your denying it, for a child could see it." He admitted it to himself, and in words very like the above. It was that last ball that had settled the matter beyond a doubt.

The floor of the "Royal Hotel" ball-room at Plymouth, which was built on springs especially for the assembly balls, is probably one of the best in the world. It had been an entirely new sensation to Lifton to find himself dancing—and dancing really well—upon its polished surface, instead of merely lumbering away, as Jack had once delicately put it, "like an old cow." To feel himself gliding along—Mollie's tall form in his arms—in perfect step and time with her, partaking in her pleasure, and seeing that he himself contributed to it, was an entirely new and quite delirious sensation. Formerly he would occasionally ask Mollie or her sister for a dance as a matter of duty. Now he realised, for the first time, that a waltz with Mollie was something very nearly divine.

Have we not already said that she was the best dancer in Plymouth? At the above-named ball, Nellie Watson had not enjoyed herself at all. She had gone to it attired in an old dress, wilfully refusing to wear any of the new ones she had given her sister, and she had declared herself *passée* more persistently than ever. Even to the

supper, to which she had permitted a gray-headed major to conduct her, she paid but small attention—ungratefully telling him that "no one but Jack Treleaven knew how to feed her properly;" for she was not afraid to mention her absent friend's name; and, on this particular occasion, took an especial pleasure in doing so, for she knew the major to be inimical to Jack, entirely, it may be mentioned, on Miss Nellie Watson's own account.

"And that gentleman," said the major, referring to Jack, "has just done something so startling, that I conclude, Miss Watson, he is never likely to have the opportunity of 'feeding' you again?" The major was rather glad to get this chance of a cut at Jack.

"And that gentleman," replied Nellie, "has done nothing at all startling, and I conclude, Major Turnfield, he may have the opportunity of 'feeding me' again whenever he likes!"

"Oh!" said the major, stiffly; "shall we return to the ball-room?"

"Oh!" said Nellie, mimicking him, "I think we will!"

The major did not speak to her again for a week; at the end of that time, he went over to Moor Lodge and laid his elderly heart at her feet, which Nellie returned to him "with thanks" on the spot.

By this time "Bung" had become thoroughly awake to the fact, that he was head over ears in love with Mollie; and was in consequence in a most desponding and uncomfortable frame of mind, asking himself the same questions over and over again every hour of the day. Let us ask the question too! for it is easy to see what is passing in the mind of that distinguished soldier, beer-

drinker, and sign-painter. Does Mollie love him? Does Mollie—that generous-hearted, good-natured, accomplished, handsome and happy girl—care about him? Do her pulses beat any quicker when he is by? Do the roses in her cheeks become a deeper shade when he approaches? Do those merry, truthful eyes brighten, as they watch him coming up the avenue to the lodge? Does the day seem any fairer while he is there? or duller when he goes? With such an open nature as hers, it would not be easy for such signs of love as these, did they exist, to escape notice. And yet, stay! with an open nature like hers, such signs might betoken only a kindly friendliness. It is all very perplexing. In fact, Captain Lifton, if you want to have an answer to your questions, you must go and ask for it yourself; for we are utterly unable to obtain it for you.

And this was what, shortly afterwards, Captain Lifton made up his mind to do. He made up his mind he would ask Mollie Watson to be his wife on the first opportunity; for when Lifton settled to do a thing, easy-going fellow as he was, he generally did it at once, and was not given to shilly-shallying over whatever matter there might be in hand. And so he went out to Horrabridge next day with a fixed purpose—anxious in the extreme, it is true, and fearful of the result of his temerity. But it has often been said that "man proposes and God disposes." Captain Lifton was to prove once more the truth of the old proverb; with the exception that, this time, man did *not* propose!

On arriving at Moor Lodge he found that his bird had flown—there was no Mollie to propose to! She had left unexpectedly to stay with some friends at a country-house in Wales. The rich old lady with whom she had gone to

stay was an eccentric person, wont to come at odd and out-of-the-way times and seasons, and to depart in the same fashion. She had appeared suddenly at the Watsons' the day before, with an immense quantity of baggage, telling them she had come to stay for some time with them; but that very evening Nellie, who could not stand the airs and graces of "the old witch," as she called her, had managed somehow to offend her, and off she went next morning, taking her godchild and pet, Mollie, with her for an indefinite period.

Poor "Bung"! he was excessively disappointed. He did not know when he might see her again. Although he was quite prepared to ask Mollie to be his wife, he shrank from putting the proposition in writing. His was not the pen of a ready writer, and he knew that, if he spent days and nights at it, he could never convey to her by letter all the love and adoration he felt for her; and it was, moreover, possible that he might, by his blundering composition, make himself ridiculous in her eyes. No, he would rather wait than write. And wait he did, trying to "possess his soul in patience;" but often, as the days slipped by, and she did not return, losing that patience, and cursing his luck and the old lady together. For the first time in his life Lifton was tormented by a sensation of jealousy, not against any particular person, but against mankind in general.

"Would not," he argued to himself, "Caryndyd Castle, whither his Mollie had flown, be sure to be filled with men for the pheasant shooting? And would not all of them be sure to fall in love with Mollie, her lovely face and gentle manners? Something probably quite different to what they were accustomed to?" For in his unreasoning jealousy Lifton set down these unknown men as being all of the very

worst character, and accustomed only to the very worst form of female society. "And might not Mollie in her innocence be in her turn captivated by one of these Lovelaces—these Roderick Randoms? Might she not—if ever she returned at all—return as Mrs. Roderick Random? and would she not find out, when too late, that there was no escape from the villain? Confound him!" said Lifton, clenching his teeth as he thought of his imaginary enemy, who was, in his excited imagination, rapidly assuming a tangible form. "Confound him! Only let me get hold of him! I'll teach the scoundrel that he shall not wreck her happiness for nothing, no matter whether the law gives me a right to take the matter into my own hands or not!" And in his imaginary vindication of the law, having nearly reached the Divorce Court by this time, this usually undemonstrative, good-tempered man gave the table such a kick as not only upset it, with ink-pot and everything on it, but capsized it with such a noise that it brought in his next-door neighbour at "the double" to see "what the blazes" was the matter!

On entering, this gentleman was naturally much surprised to see the quiet "Bung," the peaceful sign-painter, standing with clenched fists and flushed cheeks, apostrophising and kicking his fallen foe—the table—while the ink meandered in a winding stream over the floor. He looked at "Bung" for a moment, and then, turning, rushed from the room, with all possible despatch, to the mess, to tell the fellows there that "Bung" had gone mad, and was fighting with his table.

"Hooray!" roared the assembled subalterns. "Let's go and see the sport!"

"I'll back the table!" cried one.

"I'll back 'Bung'!" cried another.

"Bung," who heard them coming in troops, whooping and yelling, had only just time to elude them by flying down the servants' staircase, leaving his room, with its already maltreated furniture, to their tender mercies.

Is it not strange that the passion of love should have such a destructive tendency in some temperaments? It may be remembered that in Jack Treleaven it had taken the form of breaking or trying to break telescopes, while now we see that the same cause had, in his friend, developed the variety of kicking and cursing his articles of furniture "for their d——d villainy!"

But we left "Bung's" room in possession of the gilded youth of the regiment, and, the afternoon being wet, they determined not to be disappointed of their "lark." They had chevied his flying coat-tails down the back stairs, but he had too much of a start for them, and was out past the guard and into the street too soon for recapture. The young officers, therefore, went to Lifton's room and held a formal court of inquiry upon the condition it was found in. They said "They considered this only due to themselves as a first step;" so that, in case anything was found broken when they left, it should be carefully recorded that, "in the opinion of the court, Captain Lifton, alias Bung, alias the sign-painter, was wholly and solely to blame, and liable for all expenses in the matter." The opinion of the court having been written out in a large and legible hand, upon the best writing-paper they could find, was nailed upon the door and signed by the president and members. Another copy of the "proceedings of the board" was pinned to the sheets; for, to be strictly formal and business-like, the proceedings were in duplicate.

Then a search was instituted for liquor. A bottle of

whisky having been discovered, was emptied to their absent host's health, then placed at the foot of the bed, filled with water, as a hot-bottle. Tooth-brushes, hair-brushes, and combs were collected, put to bed, and tucked in, but not the sponge—"Bung" was too popular for that—nor were any of his painting materials touched; but every other article in the room of which it was possible to "make hay" was made hay of.

Lastly, a "mawkin," or lay figure, was constructed on the substratum of one of the easels. Dressed in a pair of regimental trousers, with a corporation formed of a pillow, draped with a great-coat, and crowned with Lifton's once best high hat, this weird figure stood directly opposite the door, defiantly brandishing the telescope over its head, waiting to welcome Lifton on his return.

After dark, "Bung" came quietly back to his quarters, and the pleasant surprise as he opened the door was quite a success, for it was a splendid "mawkin" that greeted him.

Truly that happy fellow, the British subaltern, is often an ingenious dog, and to bring out his ingenuity there is nothing like a wet afternoon.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN PARIS.

WHILE events had thus been following their own course in Plymouth and its environs, Jack Treleaven had arrived in Paris, and we must now trace his proceedings from that time until his unexpected reappearance in front of the summer-house in the "Long" plantation at Tristillian.

On their arrival in Paris, Jack and his sister had joined their sick uncle at the well-known "Hôtel Meurice" in the Rue Rivoli. Here they remained about a fortnight, while the sick man hovered between life and death. It was the first time in his life that Jack had been brought face to face with sickness in an aggravated form; but, though utterly inexperienced, he, from sheer goodness of heart, rose to the occasion as if he had been a born nurse, and, with his sister, kept watch and ward night and day in the sick-room. Jack deserves all the more credit for this when we remember all the attractions the gay city has for a young man. But, pleasure-loving as he was, Jack Treleaven was far too fond of his sister to let her perform all the trying offices of a sick-room, while he amused himself. Therefore, resolutely resisting the seductions of Paris, he passed more of his time indoors than ever he had done before in his life.

For once, strange to say, the man proved the better nurse, and Jack seemed able to manage his dying uncle and fulfil all his requirements better than his sister could do. The invalid, recognising this with all the selfishness of sickness, was never happy unless his nephew was in the room. So Jack had more than his share of the work, but, being really fond of his uncle, he did it willingly.

Paris was, at this season, rapidly refilling, the *monde* and *demi-monde* returning after their relaxations at *la chasse* and the watering-places; and the theatres were again all in full swing. Jack's sister insisted one evening on her brother's taking an outing, for he was looking pale and done-up from the unaccustomed confinement. She had herself, in consequence of his having proved such a good nurse, been able to go a couple of times with some English friends to the play, whereas he had never once left the house by night and but seldom in the daytime.

Dora was just then being played at the Vaudeville, and Jack, who had seen it in its English form, *Diplomacy*, determined to compare the two. Picking up a friend at the Washington Club—for, wherever Jack went, he found old friends springing up round him like mushrooms—they repaired, after a comfortable repast, to the above-named pretty little theatre.

Jack was a good French scholar, having passed several years abroad before joining the army; he was, therefore, at first too much interested in the piece to take much notice of the people. During the entr'acte, however, following the custom of Rome, he and his friend took a turn in the *foyer*, and then, with a last look round the house, resumed their seats.

"Look," exclaimed the latter, as they did so; "there's

a very pretty girl up there, in a box to the left, talking to a dark, good-looking fellow. Do you know them, Treleaven? They look English, and have been watching us the last minute or two."

Jack looked, and instantly recognised Hemmings as one of the occupants of the box; of the lady's face he only just caught a glimpse, for she had drawn back behind the curtain and remained there. In that moment he had been struck by the extraordinary likeness this young lady bore to some one he knew. He could not for the life of him think who it was she resembled so closely; but taking her for some relation of Hemmings', probably his sister, he gave up puzzling his brain, and turning to the stage, became again absorbed in the performance, to which he was paying great attention, lest his unaccustomed ear should lose any of those *équivoques* and *jeux-de-mots*, which make a French play so sparkling. His friend, meantime, had been intently watching the box which contained the Englishman and the young lady, by whom he seemed to be quite fascinated. As the curtain fell on the closing scene, and the lights were again turned on full, he elbowed Jack sharply, saying:

"Look, now! isn't she awfully pretty? The best-looking girl I've seen in Paris, by Jove! Such a fresh, clear, English complexion she has, too—so different from these sallow Frenchwomen."

Jack raised his eyes to the box, and this time plainly saw the young lady, who was so much the object of his friend's admiration. She had stood up to leave, and her profile was turned towards them, showing to perfection the graceful contour of her full white throat and small shapely head, with its sunny hair twisted into a knot low on the

neck. He could no longer doubt who it was she resembled. It was—it must be—Laura Luscombe herself! Jack felt certain of it for a moment, but the girl left the box without turning her full-face towards him, and, after an instant's reflection, he dismissed the idea as preposterous. Had not Laura told him herself, not a fortnight ago, as they returned to the mill from that memorable fishing expedition, that she had obtained a situation as governess to a family in London, and had he not met her on her way there at Newton Abbot junction? Had he not himself, at the mill-gate—noticing how down-in-the-mouth she appeared to be at leaving home for the first time—made her promise, if ever she was in difficulty or wanted a friend, to write to him? Oh, no! The idea of little Laura Luscombe —the "maid of the mill"—as a beautifully-dressed young lady, in a box at a Parisian theatre, was quite too ridiculous.

Still our hero felt inclined to try to get a closer inspection of the young lady, who looked so like what Laura might have looked had she been born in a different station of life. Of course, when he met Hemmings he could easily find out who she was, but in the meantime he and his friend might as well have another look at her. But by the time they had pushed their way through the crowded doorways, Hemmings and the young lady, having left a few minutes sooner, had disappeared.

Jack and his friend laughed good-humouredly at their disappointment, and then—according to the correct Parisian programme for gentlemen—strolled down to the celebrated *Café Américain* to obtain *un grog*, and a view of all the pretty and faultlessly attired ladies to be found *chez* Peter's, for an hour after the close of the theatres and places of amusement.

Seated at one of the little tables under the verandah, facing the boulevard, Jack presently saw Hemmings stroll in, apparently bent on seeing and being seen. Jack asked the commander of the *Adelaide* to join them at table, and introduced his friend. After the usual inquiry, "What brings you to Paris?" made by all Englishmen on first meeting in that city, without in the least caring what answer they get; and after the usual unsatisfactory replies, which are nevertheless perfectly satisfactory, the conversation turned upon the play.

"I really think," said Jack, "that if the piece is by Sardou, as I believe it is, it's about the best thing he has written. Don't you, Hemmings?"

"Upon my word, I don't know," said the latter. "To tell the truth, I don't understand French well, and was not paying much attention to it."

"No," laughed Jack, "you had something better to do. That was a very pretty young lady you had with you. Do you know, if you will excuse my saying so, she reminded me very much of some one we both know—Laura Luscombe, of Denham Bridge. May I ask who she is?"

At the mention of Laura's name, Hemmings, by a sudden movement of his hand, had managed to capsize his long tumbler of grog on to the stone floor, smashing it to bits of course. He stooped to pick up the pieces, though an obsequious waiter had hurried up to remove the broken glass on hearing the crash.

"What an awkward chap I am!" said he, composedly, addressing Jack. "I beg your pardon, what were you saying when I broke the tumbler? Something about Laura Luscombe, wasn't it?"

Jack nodded assent.

"Ah!" said Hemmings, with a thoughtful smile, "you think so? Well, now you speak of it, I do see a likeness to the miller's little girl in my sister-in-law; about the eyes, don't you think?" looking inquiringly at Jack.

"I did not particularly notice her eyes," said Jack, "she was too far off; but I thought at first that it actually was Miss Luscombe herself."

"It is very funny," said Hemmings. "I must tell Katherine what a pretty girl she has been taken for."

Here Jack's friend, who was a member of the Embassy, struck into the conversation.

"If, Captain Hemmings, you and your sister-in-law are making any stay in Paris, I shall be very happy to send her a card for a ball at the Embassy this week. I happen to have one still left at my disposal."

Strange that this gentleman's friendship for Jack should prompt him thus to offer a chance acquaintance what many ladies in Paris were sighing for in vain! Yet such is human nature, that generous actions are frequently done from an equally unknown motive.

Hemmings was ungrateful enough not to appear to appreciate this kind offer for his "sister-in-law," as he ought to have done. Hastily finishing off the now renewed grog, he said, "He was afraid she would not be in Paris so long"; then, remembering an appointment, bid Jack good night and left, forgetting to mention where he was staying.

Jack felt a little annoyed at his sudden departure, as he had not had time to inquire about Plymouth friends. He was also rather surprised at its suddenness, for a moment previously Hemmings had been sitting like a man who had no intention of stirring for an hour or so.

"Do you think, Treleaven, that there's anything queer

about that fellow's sister-in-law?" remarked Jack's friend as soon as Hemmings had gone. "Did you notice what a hurry he was in to be off when I offered him the ball-ticket for her? By Jove! she's a very pretty girl, though. I wish she was coming to the ball, whoever she may be."

Jack could not understand it, but he kept his thoughts to himself, and soon after they left the café. Once back in the "Hôtel Meurice," he had enough to do in the sick-room without bothering his head any further with Hemmings and his female relations.

A few days after this the old gentleman took a sudden turn for the better, and, although fully conscious that he could never recover, he insisted on being taken by easy stages to Florence, where, many years ago, his young wife had died and been buried. Here, after lingering for about a fortnight longer, he too departed for the undiscovered country, lovingly watched and tended to the last by Jack and his sister. And now, at the age of twenty-seven, Jack Treleaven found himself a baronet, and the owner of several thousands per annum.

At this crisis of his life who did his thoughts first fly to? Was it to Nellie Watson, or was it to Ada Triscott? The one we have heard him propose to? We never heard him propose to the other; we only know that once, on board a ship, he had serious thoughts of doing so. We are inclined to think that this latter was the young lady to whom his thoughts had flown, and who, notwithstanding that other proposal, he hoped would soon consent to share his title and wealth. But, before returning to England, Jack had heard from "Bung," to whom he had written from Florence, telling his whereabouts and his doings. Lifton, in his letter, gave the whole story of Laura's dis-

appearance and Jack's implication therein, begging him to lose no time in setting himself right with the Watsons and other friends.

The light had at last broken upon Jack. He saw it all now, and in the midst of his horror and disgust he could not help smiling at his own simplicity in not having seen or guessed something of the sort in Paris. Of course that was Laura herself at the theatre—how could he have mistaken her for a moment? That blackguard Hemmings! He remembered the breaking of the glass, and his confused manner in refusing the ball-ticket. Why, even his friend at the time had suspected something wrong about the lady. Yet he himself, foolishly, had suspected nothing unusual.

Burning with rage and indignation, the new-fledged baronet hastened back to England as soon as possible after the funeral of his uncle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JACK'S RETURN.

A FEW days after his return, and as soon as the law business relating to his succession to his uncle's title and estates had been settled, Sir John Treleaven ran down to Plymouth to see his friend Lifton. On arriving in the mess of his regiment, Jack was heartily welcomed by those of his brother-officers who were not away on leave. They one and all seemed glad of his good fortune. Although he was clad in deep mourning, these gentlemen did not think it necessary to make any great show of condolence with him under the circumstances.

"So the old chap is gone, is he, Jack?" said one. "Sorry he's dead, of course," said another; "still, it was very considerate of him to leave his money to a fellow who'll know how to spend it. And you're a baronet, too! Gad, there'll be no holding you now, I suppose. By the way, perhaps you'll kindly inform us—officially, of course—how we are to address you? We shall have to be very respectful to a man of your exalted rank."

And Jack, in spite of his trappings of woe, very nearly found himself engaged in a bear-fight five minutes after entering the ante-room, owing to the audacious attempt of one of his brother-subalterns to "bonnet the barrow-night."

He did not, moreover, escape some chaffing remarks in reference to the late escapade with which he was generally credited. His brother-officers considered Jack had laid himself open to this kind of thing by his clumsiness in being found out; for, although his uncle had died, there was not one of them who imagined for a moment that his uncle's illness was the cause of his sudden departure on leave.

After the circumstantial account every one had heard of his having been seen with Laura at Newton Abbot junction —reports he had not as yet contradicted, it must be remembered—it was not strange that these reports were popularly believed. He now most emphatically denied any connection whatever with Laura's elopement, but was too generous to say thus publicly that he had found out accidentally who was the companion of her flight.

His assertions of innocence were met with cries of, "Go it, old fellow! Quite right to say you did not do it!" accompanied by more or less incredulous smiles. The fact was that not one of them cared two straws about the matter; it did not concern them. If one of their number had taken it into his head to run off with a whole harem of women, probably the only remark made upon the subject would have been that "they hoped he would be able to keep them."

One of the great advantages of our regimental system is that officers never concern themselves about one another's private affairs. It is indeed surprising to find how little two men, who have lived in the same regiment for years, will know of each other's means or family connexions, or indeed, sometimes, whether they are respectively married or single. Of course, if Jones has a wife, and brings her to

live with him at the place where his regiment is stationed, everybody knows it. Well and good! But if, on the other hand, Jones gets married and goes to India, leaving his wife behind with her relations for a year or two, half the men in the regiment probably would know nothing, and care less, about Jones's domestic relations, and certainly never dream of asking a question concerning them.

So long as a man behaves himself as a gentleman in his relations with his brother officers, that is all they want, without troubling themselves about each other's private business. Even if intimate with a man, you might live with him for years, never knowing whether he had father or mother, sister or brother, unless he himself volunteered the information. Curiosity is not by any means the failing of the British officer as a class.

Escaping shortly from the mess, the two friends are once more seated in "Bung's" quarters, which, by-the-bye, are in a much more orderly condition than when we last saw them.

"Well, old fellow! so you're back again, owner of a title and estate in North Devon, and six or seven thousand a year. Upon my word, Jack, it will be a change for you, who were always so hard up. Now, what are you going to do? Take my advice, be careful at the start, and don't make a fool of yourself. It's easy enough, you know, 'old son,' when one comes suddenly into unexpected riches. I hope you won't leave the service. However, we can talk of that by-and-by. There is something else to be considered. You know, I suppose, that, rightly or wrongly, you are 'dished' with all your female acquaintance?"

"Yes, 'Bung,' I'm afraid so; but I hope when I see them I can explain matters easily, so as to clear myself, at

all events, with those in whose eyes I wish to appear clean. Ladies are not like those asses in the mess just now, who judge one by their own standard. I am sure that neither the Watsons nor the Triscotts will doubt me for a moment when I tell them that I had nothing whatever to do with that poor girl's abduction. I may, however, find it difficult to avoid implicating another in the matter, and, although the blackguard deserves to be shown up, that is not my business any more than I suppose he thought it was his to contradict the rumour about me, and thereby throw suspicion on himself. You may be surprised to hear whose fault it is that I have got such a bad name, while not a soul suspects him in the remotest degree. You know him well—Hemmings is the man with whom Laura Luscombe is living at present."

"Hemmings! Are you sure? Why, he is the very man who always remarked to me that it was a pity you were so thick with the 'maid of the mill,' as Miss Watson called her. He used to say he was afraid you would damage yourself by it with the Triscotts. He is staying with them now at Tristillian. By Jove, Jack, I hope you are mistaken; if not, he must be a d——d scoundrel, and one who would be capable, by hints, of doing you no end of harm. But how do you know?"

"How? Curse him, there is no mistake. I saw her with him in a theatre at Paris; but, although so struck with the resemblance of the lady with him to Laura that I asked him who she was, on his telling me she was his sister-in law, I thought no harm. It was only on receipt of your letter, a fortnight after, that I knew he was a liar, and that it must have been Laura herself whom I saw, dressed so smartly, sitting in the box with him at

the Vaudeville. Staying with the Triscotts now, is he? D——n him! then I wonder what he's done with that poor girl? Deserted her already, I suppose; and I dare say the blackguard is making up to Ada now!" Jack's face was white with passion, but he spoke calmly. "I hardly know what is best to be done," he continued. "Miss Triscott showed me in such a marked manner that she wished to have nothing more to do with me, that I do not fancy intruding myself upon her society any more; but still it would be my duty to warn her against Hemmings. I never was an informer yet though, 'Bung,' old man, and I don't care to commence the trade now, especially as it might seem done out of spite, even if I was believed. Seeing the ingenuity this infernal scoundrel has displayed, as what you tell me yourself shows, what is more probable than that he has poisoned all their ears against me, so that they will not believe one word I say?"

"I think, Jack, you ought to go out to Horrabridge, see Nellie Watson, and tell her everything. She has been the one friend who, in your absence, has stuck up for you right and left; although, as she herself told me, and as I could not help acknowledging, nothing seemed clearer than that you were to blame. What an ass you were not to give me an address, or leave word for me of the cause of your departure! All this might have been cleared up long ago —at any rate, with the Watsons. But what is passed cannot be helped. Let us look at the present, and let me tell you that I believe Nellie Watson to be the best friend you have in the world besides myself, and you owe it to her to show her some little gratitude for fighting your battles in your absence. She has not improved in temper, though, I warn you," added Lifton, with a smile, as he recollected

the episode of the picture; "still I think you understand her temper better than any one else, and you cannot do better than take her advice as to what you shall do about the Triscotts."

"Very well, 'Bung,' I will go out to see her to-morrow morning. And now, old man, tell me all about yourself and what you have been doing all this time."

"There is not much to relate," said "Bung," somewhat sheepishly; "but I suppose I may as well take the bull by the horns and tell 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth' at once, to save complications."

"Come on, out with it, old fellow!" said Jack, encouragingly.

"Well, to begin with, I'm in love; to go on with, I'm desperately in love; and to wind up with, I'm miserably in love;" and poor "Bung" did look wobegone as he uttered the last sentence.

"Ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho!" laughed Jack, forgetting all his own troubles at the sight of "Bung's" solemn face as he made this most unlooked-for announcement. Jumping up, he brought down his hand between his friend's shoulders with a bang that took all the breath out of his lungs. "Bravo! go it, old man! The steady old 'Bung'—who never yet flirted more than was safe—nobbled at last! Ho! ho! ho! Ha! ha! ha!" (Another hearty bang.)

"Confound you, Jack! Leave me alone, will you, you fool! And don't stand laughing there like a hyena!" cried "Bung," with assumed indignation. "If you think I am going to be downtrodden by a bloated aristocracy for imitating their follies, you're mistaken. So you'd better look out."

Seeing the bloated aristocrat again advancing for another bang, Captain Lifton doubled his own by no means small fist as a preventive measure. This had a salutary effect, and brought his tormentor to reason. They resumed their seats, Jack saying:

"Come, forgive me, old fellow. You must not grudge me that laugh, for it's the first I've had since I saw you last. So you are in love? Well! I'm delighted to hear it, for it shows that you, at least, have taken a step in the right direction during the last month. But let's hear who the young lady is—I'm dying to know that."

"Behave yourself like a Christian, and you shall hear. I don't think I need dwell upon her good looks and good qualities to you, when I tell you who she is—but I believe I won't tell you, after all; it's no subject for laughter;" for Jack was still smiling broadly.

"Yes, tell me, 'Bung,' old boy—don't be shy—out with the lady's name. Surely, if she's worth loving, you ought not to be ashamed of her name."

This last had the desired effect in overcoming Lifton's shyness; for such it was that prevented his naming his inamorata.

"Her name, Jack, is Mollie Watson; but I do not know if she cares about me or not; she was spirited away to some beastly place in Wales called Caryndyd, before I had time to ask her that question."

Jack had jumped out of his chair as if with the intention of repeating the banging process once more; but a warning twinkle in Lifton's eye, as he seized the poker and began raking the bottom bar of the fireplace, told him that the long-suffering "Bung" had got a little tired of this sort of congratulation; so he contented himself with wringing his

friend's hand warmly, and saying, with much real feeling and kindness:

"Well, all I can say is, I sincerely hope she does, for I believe you could not love a better woman, nor—I say it with honest conviction—she a better man;" and the two friends sat up yarning away until far into the night.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ENCOUNTER WITH FOX.

THE next morning after breakfast, having an hour or two to spare, before the train by which he intended going to Horrabridge would start, Jack went out for a stroll, while his brother-officers were engaged in morning parade and other regimental duties. Having sauntered out of what is known as the north-eastern barrier gate of the Raglan barracks, Jack did not seem to know exactly what to do with himself, and stood irresolute for a minute or two, looking in the direction of the walk across the people's park, which he had so often traversed going to and from Tamar Terrace. It had lost its attraction for him; the house in Tamar Terrace was closed, as was Ada's heart, against him, and the walk through the park looked bleak and deserted in the chilly December morning.

Jack turned, with a sigh, in the opposite direction, down through Fore Street, the principal street in Devonport, to the dockyard gates. Although so close to the barrack-walls, this was almost a *terra incognita* to our hero. In fact, with the exception of having once driven through it in a cab on his way to a ball at the Devonport "Royal Hotel," it is doubtful if he had ever been down that way before. Indeed, this street is nothing but a haunt for Jews, pawnbrokers, sailors,

outfitters, *et hoc genus omne.* Except to the seeker after old curiosities, or the ready-made clothing in its numerous slop-shops, Fore Street, Devonport, presents few attractions to the public. Still strolling along, smoking his cigar, and indolently looking in at the windows at the strange sea-faring gear, or valuable odds and ends brought by sailors from foreign countries, only to be deposited in the pawn-shop, Jack insensibly reached the other end of this street, in which he was probably, at that hour of the day, the only idle wayfarer. He was roused from the reverie into which he had fallen, by the words, spoken in an authoritative but civil voice:

"No smoking allowed in here, sir."

Looking up, he perceived that he was entering the dock-yard gates.

"Capital," thought Jack, "here, at last, is the opportunity I have intended for so long to take, of visiting the dockyard; this will pass an hour very well."

On his making known to the man at the gate that he was an officer, and extinguishing his cigar, he was allowed to proceed, although indeed the official had not thought it necessary to inquire whether he belonged to the army or not, the fact being too self-evident.

After examining the workshops, where he was scorched by the molten metal and deafened by the noise of the steam-hammers, he was glad to escape to the water-side. Here he looked curiously at the men-of-war, in every stage of dismantlement and every stage of refitting, as they lay in the different dry and wet docks. In one of the latter a ship was lying evidently just ready for sea. Standing on the shore, Jack was able to see but a portion of her decks, but what he did see was sufficient, with his soldier's eye for

neatness and order, to make him wish for more, for everything looked bright and clean as a new pin. Her crew, too, as far as he could judge from the number of men he saw on her decks, seemed to be all aboard—in fact, she was only waiting for the tide now at half-flood to rise to haul out into the Sound previous to sailing.

Stepping over the gangway—a mere plank without a rail—on to the deck, Jack inquired of a tall man in uniform, which he took to be that of an officer:

"Pray, what is the name of this ship, and is it permissible to go over her?"

"H.M.S. *Hesperus* is the name, sir. As the captain is on board, I am not sure whether you can see her or not. If you'll give me your card, I'll ask the officer of the watch."

As he spoke, the man, whom Jack now perceived to be a warrant, not a commissioned officer, from the buttons instead of lace on his sleeves, eyed Sir John Treleaven closely, while to Jack himself there seemed a ring in the voice and a look in the face of the person addressing him that was quite familiar. He gave his card. The man glanced at it—to satisfy his curiosity, thought Jack—before taking it to the officer of the watch, and, stopping short, read, in a strange voice, which seemed more than ever familiar to Jack:

"Sir John Treleaven."

Jack elevated his eyebrows in haughty surprise at what he considered a piece of unwarrantable impertinence.

"Are you the officer who used to come to Mr. Triscott's house in Tamar Terrace, or his brother?" went on the man.

As he spoke, it slowly dawned upon Jack's mind that the speaker, although greatly changed by his dress and having

shaved off his beard, was the same William Fox whom he had often seen in the above-named house.

"Yes, of course I am the same Mr. Treleaven."

The words were hardly uttered, when Fox sprang at him and seized him by the throat.

"Thank God you have come to me! You infernal scoundrel! Providence has sent you, that I may avenge her."

Jack heard the words hissed in his ear, but so sudden was the attack, that before he could recover breath he was borne back to the gangway by his powerful assailant, whose evident intention was to throw him headlong into the dock. But self-preservation is one of the first laws of nature, and almost instinctively the young officer had wrenched one arm free and struck out violently, hitting his foe a tremendous blow straight between the eyes. He might as well have struck a stone wall. Fox, in his maniacal passion, did not seem to feel it, but with tightened grasp forced young Tre'eaven back more rapidly towards the water. Jack's presence of mind, momentarily lost, had returned, and he knew that he must employ stratagem, to have any chance against the giant strength of his adversary. He seized Fox by the throat in a grip of iron. He was now being forced almost into the opening in the ship's side. Contriving for a second to get a purchase against the bulwark, which thus left him free to use his legs, he entwined them with those of his enemy, encircling him at the same time with his disengaged right arm. He saw that, if he would not go overboard, there was but one chance left him. He seized his opportunity, and, with an almost superhuman effort, tripped his antagonist up, throwing him down, and *across* the opening. Of course he fell with him, but in this position, until he was completely choked, which he felt he soon would be,

he was quite capable of enough passive resistance to foil Fox in his continued efforts to throw him over the side. If he could only shake off that terrible bulldog grip at his throat he would be free. Would help never come? Maddened with rage, he too made a desperate attempt to strangle his adversary, and once more hit him, but feebly this time, for his strength was exhausted. He could dimly see the forms of the blue-jackets approaching, when Fox, struggling round, swung himself through the opening, and together, locked still in a firm embrace, they plunged over the side into the dock, and the dark waters closed over them.

Poor Jack! It was a strange recompense for having once saved Laura Luscombe from a watery grave, that he should now suffer such a fate at the hands of her infuriated and disappointed lover. To be first throttled, and then drowned in a dock, is a hard and inglorious fate for any man; but how much more so when he is innocent of any crime, young and handsome, beloved perhaps, and loving certainly.

Oh, ladies! think well ere you lightly refuse a man who loves you. See how, as in the case of William Fox, a sane and sober man may be driven to madness; an upright man may become a murderer. The innocent, as well as the guilty, may be made to suffer through your cruelty. Think of it ere you too are the cause of blood-guiltiness.

"But," some reader will ask, "how could all this have happened on board one of Her Majesty's men-of-war—especially when fully manned and equipped? How was it possible for William Fox, the crew of the *Hesperus* looking on, to deliberately murder his innocent victim?"

It was easy enough. The whole affray did not take half the time it has taken to describe its fatal course and termination. The instant Fox had seized the young baronet by the

throat, one of the few blue-jackets standing near at the time said: "He must be a Fenian spy!" for this happened to be a period of Fenian scare, when dynamite explosions were expected everywhere. The word was passed from mouth to mouth: "A Fenian spy! A Fenian spy!" Consequently no hand was lifted in poor Jack's assistance; the officer on the bridge had not seen the beginning of the fight. When, however, he turned and saw something unusual going on by the gangway, he rushed to the spot to hear the same words repeated.

"Secure him at once!" he cried, but, as he said the words, Fox had made his final and successful effort, and had precipitated himself and the supposed destroyer of Laura Luscombe into the dock alongside, ere the twenty blue-jackets—who, seeing the officer approaching, had, according to strict rules of man-of-war discipline, waited for his order—rushed forward too late to obey it.

The officer himself, a Lieutenant Durnford, was the first overboard after them, and he was followed by two more. He it was who brought Jack's lifeless body to the steps up the side of the dock, while the gunner was also seized and brought ashore a minute after.

But, kind readers, we will no longer keep you in suspense. Jack was not dead, though seemingly lifeless when fished out of the dock. As he afterwards himself remarked, perhaps he was reserved for a higher fate. His card, which had been picked up, was handed to the captain, who had appeared on the scene before the two insensible combatants were brought on board once more.

Sir John Treleaven,
—th Regiment,
Naval and Military Club.

"There has been some terrible mistake," said the captain of the *Hesperus*. "This is no Fenian spy." For he too had been told the same story, and had supposed that it was in a laudable endeavour to arrest some miscreant, that the newly-appointed gunner had, with that miscreant been so nearly drowned.

Word was immediately sent up to the Raglan Barracks, where the regiment was known to be quartered, that an accident had happened to Sir John Treleaven, and that it was not yet known whether he would survive or not. "Bung" came on board at once, but it was deemed inadvisable to move his friend, and the ship was now about to sail. The captain courteously invited him to remain on board, promising to land him at Falmouth or Queenstown. This kind offer Captain Lifton accepted, sending word to the colonel the circumstances as far as he knew them.

Thus when our hero opened his eyes, he found himself in the cabin of the captain of the *Hesperus*, which gallant craft was well out at sea.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE PAPERS.

IT was indeed a narrow escape that Jack had had from death. He was unaware of the cause of the ferocious attack that had been made upon him. The officers of the ship seemed equally astonished with himself, and also to be ashamed that such an incident should mark the opening of their ship's commission. William Fox, on recovering from the effects of his immersion, which he was the first to do, had inquired whether Sir John Treleaven was dead or no. Upon receiving an answer in the negative, he remarked:

"It is a pity that such a scoundrel should still live, but perhaps it is as well on the whole. Under any circumstances I must at once request to be placed under arrest."

He refused to give any explanation of this request, but, as he persisted in it, it was complied with.

Jack, when well enough, asked to be allowed to see Fox, now a prisoner, as he hoped to be able to elucidate the mystery of the wild attack that had been made upon him. It must be borne in mind that Jack was quite unaware of any intimacy or even friendship having existed between the prisoner and the misguided Laura. He had therefore not understood, in the remotest degree, the few words uttered by the former while assaulting him.

Fox was brought into the captain's cabin under escort of two officials of his own rank. He at first declined to answer any of the questions put to him by the man he had so nearly drowned. Smiling sarcastically, he observed that it was useless his giving information about what was already known, but that there were some questions he would like to ask Sir John, did he not know how hopeless it would be to expect a truthful answer to one of them. "However," he went on, after a short pause, "I shall speak neither one way nor the other, unless I am permitted to speak alone with Sir John Treleaven."

Jack begged the captain to let him have an interview with Fox alone. The latter demurred a little at this, but gave in finally on Fox's giving his word of honour to attempt no further violence, if granted a private interview with Sir John. It is not our purpose to give a detailed account of what passed between them. Suffice it to say that to Jack was made clear the cause of the assault; while the unhappy Fox discovered that in his blind rage and thirst for vengeance he had nearly murdered an innocent man. He threw himself at Jack's feet craving his forgiveness, and thanking heaven that he had been spared the commission of an awful crime. Jack forgave him freely. Indeed, when he found that it was again mainly owing to Captain Hemmings' lying words that Fox had been deceived, he much pitied the unfortunate fellow, while feeling that he himself had yet another account to settle with the commander of the *Adelaide*.

He tried his best to console William, who was almost inconsolable at the error he had committed, and who declared himself willing to suffer the worst punishment naval law might inflict upon him for his folly.

"He only dreaded imprisonment," he said, "because he knew not but that Laura would require his help when he was powerless to aid her."

Jack promised to do his utmost to get the captain to overlook the offence altogether; but, should this be impossible, he swore to Fox to give Laura all the aid in his power whenever she might require it.

"She had herself," he informed the now repentant gunner, "solemnly promised to apply to him if in want of a friend."

"Then, sir," said Fox, "I shall go to prison—there is no chance of my being let off—cheerfully; yes, cheerfully, knowing that a man who can so generously forgive his would-be murderer will, by God's blessing, not be one who is unlikely to keep his promise to befriend the poor lost one, if ever it be in his power."

When our hero came to the captain and informed him that the attack by Fox had been all a mistake, that officer was more than ever annoyed that such a *contretemps* had occurred upon his ship. For no entreaty of Jack's would he consent to forego trying Fox by court-martial, and the only concession Jack could obtain, after a long wordy war, was that a charge of assault should be substituted for the serious and indeed the right one of attempted murder.

"For such an occurrence to happen on board one of Her Majesty's men-of-war and to be overlooked was," said the fussy little captain, "impossible, utterly impossible, sir!"

On arrival at Queenstown, Jack and "Bung" together parted from the ship and its officers with regret. Especially to Lieutenant Durnford did the former express his grateful thanks for having risked his own life to save his, and in

leaving he made him promise to come and see him at his place at some future day.

As Jack was particularly anxious not to have to appear as a witness in the court-martial about to assemble on poor Fox, the captain of the man-of-war did not insist upon it, saying: "There were plenty of witnesses without his having to be present." Jack also took a kind leave of his late enemy, telling him: "He sincerely hoped he might be lightly dealt with, and that he had begged the captain to mention to the court when it assembled that there were very extenuating circumstances in the prisoner's favour."

The prisoner wrung his hand and thanked him with tears in his eyes as he bid him good-bye.

The two friends returned *viâ* Dublin and Holyhead to Plymouth, where they arrived three days after leaving that port in the *Hesperus*. "Bung" proceeded immediately to the Raglan Barracks, but Jack, being still on leave, and being anxious also to avoid all the questions he would be sure to meet with if he accompanied his friend, went to the well-known "Duke of Cornwall Hotel" opposite the Millbay Station and barracks.

That evening, however, Jack found his room invaded, not only by officers, but by many of his former Plymouth friends, for this affair had made a noise in the place, and his safe return was immediately known. Apart, therefore, from the fact that Jack had become a baronet—a palliation in itself to many for his supposed scrape with the "Maid of the Mill"—the fact of his having so narrowly escaped being murdered was sufficient to bring all those who had any friendly feeling towards him to offer their congratulations on his having been rescued from a violent death. Many were the conjectures as to the cause of the attack; but as this was

only known to our hero himself, and to the discreet Lifton, and they neither gave any information on the subject, it was put down generally to the sudden phrenzy of a mad sailor.

Next morning, Jack determined to waste no more time in loitering about. There might, for all he knew, be fresh risks hanging over him for doing so, as misfortunes so seldom come alone. He therefore started for Horrabridge by the nine o'clock train from the station opposite.

As he opened his *Western Morning News* before entering the train, the first paragraph that met his eye was headed: "The Recent Attempted Murder of Sir John Treleaven," and commenced:

"We are glad to be able to inform our readers that this young officer has not, as at first reported, died from the effects of the brutal attack recently made upon him in the Devonport Dockyard, etc., etc. He has arrived safely in Plymouth from Queenstown, and is staying at the 'Duke of Cornwall Hotel.'"

The same subject afforded matter for a leader from the editorial pen. Jack now for the first time became aware of the importance attached to him since he had succeeded to his uncle's title and estates.

His first feeling on reading the above announcement was one of annoyance at the publicity of the whole affair; then it flashed across his mind that these reports might have reached his mother and sister, whom he had forgotten to telegraph to from Queenstown. Indeed, he had not thought at all of the likelihood of their hearing of his mishap. However, this omission he remedied before the train started, and thereby set an anxious mother's heart at rest.

There had been another besides this mother and sister

to whom the announcement of "the reported murder of Sir John Treleaven," in the *Western Morning News* of three days previous, had come as a severe blow. Was this Ada Triscott? No—no intelligence of the mishap had as yet reached her, for the *Morning News* was not a paper taken at Tristillian, and, if the report of Jack's murder had been copied into other papers, it had been overlooked in that household where nothing was being thought about but the shooting; and when men—and women too, for the matter of that—were too much occupied from morning till night at this particular period, to pay much attention to the news of the day.

But Mr. Watson, sitting at breakfast with his daughter Nellie, had seen it and read it.

"Good heaven!" said he, dropping the paper.

"Don't swear, papa, you know it spoils my breakfast," said Nellie, languidly. She was a little disgusted with herself for having by accident got up in time for nine o'clock breakfast this morning.

Mr. Watson took up the paper again, and began reading the paragraph aloud. As he finished it,

"There!" exclaimed Nellie, banging the end of her knife on the table with a violence that shook everything on it, and made her father jump in his chair. "I always told him he'd come to a bad end. Serve him right! What a fool he is to choose this time of all others to get killed too—just when, with more luck than he deserves, he has become a baronet. I suppose he's done it to spite us all, and not to give us a chance now he's worth marrying. But if he thinks we're going to mope over him, and forgive him all his sins, just because he's taken it into his head to go out of the world in a sensational manner, that's where he makes his

mistake! Very mean of him to spoil my breakfast, though, like this." And dashing the knife down on the floor, apparently in a rage, this inconsequent and irrational young woman left her breakfast untasted, and retiring to her room —did what? Acted up to the spirit of the foregoing speech? No! Threw herself face downwards on her bed, and there remained for hours.

When the servants came to do the room, and tried the door, they were told angrily to "go away," and the same at lunch-time equally angrily. At last dinner-time arrived, and Mr. Watson, in fear and trembling, again sent a servant to apprise her of the fact. She got off her bed this time, and going to the door, opened it and looked out into the passage. The maid had retired to a little distance on hearing her coming, not knowing how Miss Nellie might receive her. But Nellie only said, in rather an imploring tone:

"Will you go away? I don't want any dinner, I have a headache and want to be left alone."

"Very well, miss," said the girl; and she wondered, as she took her way downstairs again, what had happened to keep her young mistress shut up all day long in her room with neither food, fire, nor lights.

Nellie, having locked the door, once more threw herself on the bed. But the exertion of getting up had aroused her from the first stoniness of her grief, it had changed the whole current of her feelings, and brought the required relief. Silently now the great tears welled through her fingers, as she held her hand tightly clasped over her eyes. All that miserable day she had been saying, over and over to herself, "Jack is dead! Jack is dead!" but the words had no meaning for her—it was impossible to connect Jack

in her mind with any thought of death. But now she seemed all at once to realise that it must be true—true that she should never again see his handsome, good-humoured face, or hear his hearty, honest laugh.

"Oh, Jack, Jack," she sobbed, "why did you die? Shall we ever, ever meet again? Oh, yes, perhaps in an unknown world. But oh! the long, long, weary waiting."

It was characteristic of the girl that no sentimental thought of an early death for herself ever entered her head. No, she was young and strong, and had, in all probability, a long life stretching out before her. She knew that, had Jack lived, he would never have been hers; to many women this would have softened the blow of his death. But not to Nellie. She was curiously devoid of the small jealousies peculiar to most women. Her love for Jack had been a pure and unselfish one, and her sorrow was the same. For all her peculiarities could not change her heart; and that was as noble as her face and form were beautiful.

Jack, meantime—no corpse, but solid flesh and blood—was dispensing brandy-and-sodas, and receiving the congratulations of his friends, in his room at the "Duke of Cornwall Hotel."

CHAPTER XXI.

RESURRECTION.

IT was about half-past ten when Jack reached Moor Lodge. He had been told at the Horrabridge station that Mr. Watson had just left by the train for Plymouth; and so he knew he would find Nellie alone.

"It is certainly rather an early hour for a call," thought Jack, as he walked up the drive, and he began to fear that, after all that had happened, and his own supposed culpability, Nellie might refuse to see him, make the hour an excuse, perhaps, and say she was not up yet.

However, as he walked up to the door, he could see through the large plate-glass windows into the dining-room. No mistake now as to whether she was up or not. On the table were the breakfast-things not yet removed, while beyond it, leaning down by the fireplace, and apparently tying up her shoe, stood Nellie herself. With her back three-quarters turned away from the window, she did not perceive him as he stood there a minute watching her, and admiring her graceful figure. His hand was on the bell, when he changed his mind. He had only to open the hall-door and turn to the right to find himself in the dining-room. Without knowing what impulse prompted

him to dispense with the usual formality, he did so, and walked straight in, after depositing his hat and stick on the hall-table, as he had done many a time before.

Nellie, who had risen up, and was leaning her elbows on the mantelpiece, did not turn as he entered the room. She probably thought it was the servant come to take away the things. Jack thought her looking very pale as he advanced towards her. Still she did not notice him, but remained lost in thought. Nellie had seen no paper that morning with the intelligence of Jack's safety, and she was at that moment thinking of him as dead who now stood so near her alive and well.

He had come quite close to her, waiting for her to turn or move; but, with one foot on the stone carving, she remained motionless, watching the flicker of the wood fire on the hearthstone.

"Nellie!" said Jack.

Nellie gave a scream—about the only time in her life she had ever been guilty of such a thing—as she turned and saw him whom she had imagined doubly lost. Lost to them all as a friend by his own misconduct, and still more lost, and for ever, by the hand of death. She stood for a moment or two looking at him with parted lips, and the colour coming and going over her cheeks. At last she said, solemnly:

"Jack, are you dead? because, if so, I had rather you didn't come any closer."

"No, Nellie; I'm alive—at least, I think so."

She had got even paler and was shaking a little.

"Dear old Jack! Dear old Jack! I'm so glad."

Then, recovering her voice, she laid her hands on both his shoulders, and kissed him warmly. He put his arm

round her and kissed her too, as he might have kissed a dear, long-lost sister.

"There, Jack," said Nellie, "don't think I'm ever going to do that again. I never kissed a man before, and I wouldn't have done it now only that you've risen from the dead, and that's a trick you can't play us again. I thought you were dead, and forgave you everything. Far more than you deserved, you know," added Nellie, wiping her glistening eyes.

Jack too felt a choking sensation in his throat. Who would not have been moved at such a warm and unlooked-for reception?

"Now then, Jack! No more sentiment. Come and have a cup of tea. I'm so glad to see you that, in spite of all the trouble you've given me, you shall have the particular cup of strong tea I was keeping for myself. There," she said, as she poured it out, "you never knew me so self-denying before. But this is a special occasion, and the tea is not to be repeated any more than the kisses, you know, Jack."

Jack drank the tea, feeling rather as if it choked him.

"Now you've got to tell me everything," went on Nellie; "but no lies, mind! What made you run away with that girl? What have you done with her? Aren't you thoroughly ashamed of yourself? Answer these questions first, and then you may tell me how you like being a baronet, and how you escaped being murdered. You're the same as a brother to me, Jack; and don't, like a dear boy, conceal anything from me. I am afraid there has never been the same feeling of confidence between us since that day of the picnic. You remember that day I made you pretend to propose to me in the grotto during the

shower? That was a very jolly day;" looking dreamily out of the window; "since then things have not been the same, especially not since you disgraced yourself: which you have done, Jack, you know, most abominably."

"Nellie," he replied, "I think you know I never have been one for telling lies, either in great or small things; so you will believe that I am not lying when I declare most solemnly that I am blameless in that matter. It was not I who ran away with poor Laura Luscombe."

Then, according to Lifton's advice, he told her everything regarding Laura which the reader already knows. He told her also that the attack which had been made upon him had not been, as she had supposed from the newspaper account, that of a madman; but of a disappointed and true-hearted lover, revenging, as he thought, the cruel wrong wrought upon the woman he loved. He told her of the estrangement that, for some inexplicable cause, existed between himself and Ada Triscott, and asked her advice as to how to right himself in that young lady's eyes. In conclusion, he grasped Nellie's hand, and thanked her, with all the deep feeling of a warm heart, for the brave way in which she had stuck up for him in his absence, and for refusing to listen to a word against him when she was present.

The brave woman never flinched when he spoke, as she herself led him on to do, of his love for Ada Triscott. She only asked him if he was sure he loved her truly, and was willing and anxious to make her his wife, and upon his replying in the affirmative, told him that the only course open to him, and the only right one for himself and her, was to go to Tristillian as soon as possible, and exonerate himself in her eyes. Jack explained that, though anxious

to clear himself, he did not wish to implicate Captain Hemmings. Nellie respected his scruples, but told him plainly that she did not think that gentleman required the slightest consideration; for he had evidently fostered the belief which every one held of his (Jack's)guilt, and deserved no mercy.

"And now, Jack," said Nellie, "you know how much I wish for your welfare, and that, although I was prepared to forgive, how much more happy I am to know there is nothing to forgive. You have been most sadly the victim of circumstances. However, now you've got to have it out, if possible, with Ada, and to show her that you are not a jet-black sheep but the woolly-white lamb you have proved yourself to me. So take my advice; don't let the grass grow under your feet, or you may find yourself 'cut out.' It is quite early yet; you can get to Dawlish from here easily by a train that runs in half an hour. I'll make you some sandwiches, and walk down to the station with you to start you off. This time I shall be able to see with my own eyes that you really do go alone."

What Nellie's feelings were as she "started Jack off" to woo another woman it would be difficult to tell; but we know how Jack arrived at Tristillian that very evening, and met his love there in the "Long" plantation, only in time to find that Nellie's suggestion was too true, and that he was already "cut out." Again he suffered by Captain Hemmings. First his reputation taken away, and then the woman he wished to make his wife!

CHAPTER XXII.

AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

AS Jack Treleaven retraced his steps down the "Long" plantation to the little village of Tristillian, where he had left the trap which had conveyed him from Dawlish, his heart was very bitter within him. Bitter with Ada Triscott, who had never looked lovelier to him than when defiantly announcing herself as the affianced bride of another. Bitter to loathing with that other, with whom he promised himself yet to have a day of reckoning. Bitter again, and almost to madness, with himself and his own folly in having let fall the cup of happiness when raised to his lips, while, through his carelessness and indecision, another quaffed the wine of life and love that might have been his own.

Taking the train for Plymouth, he did not arrive at the Millbay station until nearly ten o'clock. He was worn out, sick at heart, and hungry, as he walked up the steps of the "Duke of Cornwall Hotel"; for, however much in love or disappointed a man may be, if he goes without food, as Jack had done nearly all day—for he had forgotten Nellie's sandwiches—he is apt to be hungry after travelling about for hours. Thinking, therefore, "Well, at any rate, I'll have a comfortable dinner before turning in, and forget for a

time that there's such a thing as a woman in the world," Jack entered the hotel. But, alas! even in so small a matter, how little are we able to do what we wish in this world of vicissitudes and trials! Our hero was once more doomed to disappointment. He was not to be allowed, even at that hour of the night, to have his dinner in peace and to forget that his career was—so much the worse for him—indissolubly bound up with and in the fair sex, who seemed to make and mar it for him at their pleasure. The eventful interviews of this eventful day were not yet over. He was fated to have yet a third interview with a woman that evening, and with one who had unintentionally caused so much sorrow to him, and to others through him. Greeting him with an obsequious bow as he went into the hotel, the head-waiter, an old acquaintance, said:

"Good evening, Sir John; fine evening, Sir John;" and putting on the familiar manner that is the wont of waiters who, as this one was, are much in the way of being spoiled by naval and military officers, the waiter continued: "I'm glad you're come back at last, Sir John; there's some one waiting upstairs, I think, would have been disappointed if you hadn't. Been waiting a very long time, Sir John."

"Who is it?" said Jack. "Captain Lifton, I suppose."

"No, Sir John; Captain Lifton did come in about six o'clock; but this is a lady, Sir John," with a significant smile.

"A lady! The deuce! Who is she?"

"The young lady said as how she preferred not giving her name; but that she'd wait for you, Sir John."

"Young lady!" Jack ran through his head all the youthful indiscretions he had been guilty of; but could

remember nothing which might bring any young lady to see him at this particular time.

"I suppose I had better go up and see," said he, not over-pleased, and somehow not over-easy in his mind as he thought of a young lady waiting for him at ten o'clock p.m.

"Yes, I think that would be the best way, Sir John,' said the man, confidentially, and adding, "the young lady said she should sleep here if you didn't return to-night, Sir John, and ordered a room. It's quite a lady, Sir John!" not forgetting the half-crown he had pocketed half an hour previously. It had purchased that quite.

"Well, get me some dinner in the coffee-room in half an hour's time," said Jack.

"Any for the young lady, Sir John?" said the waiter, looking knowing.

"Upon my word, I don't know," said Jack, testily, for he was tired and worried, and the familiarity he had once tolerated now annoyed him. But as the idea flashed across his brain, "By Jove! perhaps it's my sister come down to find out about me," he added, less snappishly, "I'll tell you presently;" and walking upstairs to his sitting-room he turned the handle of the door, to find, asleep in the arm-chair, not his sister, but—Laura Luscombe!

Laura Luscombe it was! but not Laura looking happy and fresh as a rose, as when he had seen her in the theatre at Paris, but Laura Luscombe very pretty still, but pale and thin, with dark rings under her closed eyes, that gave her, even in sleep, a tired, sad expression. As the young baronet looked at her he saw that her eyelashes were wet, while her listless fingers still held the handkerchief with which she had been drying her tears.

Tender-hearted Jack, looking on the careworn face, forgot his own troubles, and exclaimed, inwardly:

"Well, thank God, it is not I who have brought her to this!"

Laura awoke and started up.

"Oh, Mr. Treleaven—I mean, Sir John—forgive me, forgive me this intrusion. I am indeed ashamed of myself and afraid to look you in the face; but I am so miserable. You once told me if ever I wanted a friend to come to you, and now—and now I have got no one else in the whole world to whom I can turn."

Two big tears fell upon Jack's hand, as the wretched girl clutched it convulsively. Jack was, as we know, very soft-hearted; he was also, we know, a bit of a flirt, and just now in a reckless and cynical mood in which many another man might have been inclined to take a little harmless amusement out of the situation. It would have been pleasant no doubt to him to have kissed away those tears, and comforted and caressed his pretty little companion, under the guise of friendship and for "auld acquaintance, sake." But such a thought never entered Jack's head, nor any smallest feeling that, by so doing, he might revenge himself for the falseness of others.

No! Jack's first sensation was one of blank dismay at the idea of a young lady being thrown upon his hands at this hour of the night—his next one of yearning compassion for the homeless, friendless, ruined girl appealing to him for help, as her only possible friend or protector, from those paths of vice and degradation into which she had already taken the first fatal step.

The tears were flowing fast down her wasted cheeks, and an hysterical sob every now and then warned Jack

that he must be practical, and not stand there only holding the helpless little hand in his.

"Don't, Laura; don't cry," said he, cheerfully. "Come and sit down. You can tell me all about it presently;" and, with these exceedingly consolatory words, he led her back to the arm-chair, made her sit down, and began looking about the room for sherry to give her. Finding none, he rang the bell.

Now, however unhappy a woman may be, she does not like to look ridiculous before servants, so for once Jack had done the right thing at the right time, and, when the waiter entered, Laura had mopped up her tears as best she could, and was intently studying the only book in the room —one of those musty copies of the Bible, bound in a nasty-smelling brown cover, with which we are so plentifully supplied in hotels and railway-stations by the generosity of the S. P. G. An excellent plan, by the way, of the above-mentioned society, for many a man or woman is driven in sheer desperation at times to read words which may throw the light of truth on an unbelieving heart. Not so Laura Luscombe. As she turned over the leaves, the words swam before her eyes, and looked a confused mass on the dingy yellow pages.

"Bring some sherry at once, and lay the dinner in here," said Jack to the confidential waiter, who departed on his errand with a smile, for which Jack felt much inclined to kick him.

The sherry was brought in a few moments, but the look in Jack's face warned the man to indulge in no more smiles; so, depositing the sherry on the table, he disappeared at once. Having administered some to Laura, Jack bade her sit there quietly, while he went to wash his hands for dinner.

His kindness again brought the tears to her eyes, but she forced them back and took up the ancient volume, absently gazing at the pages as though it were some uninteresting picture-book. Alas! how many of us look at the sacred book in the same light—a picture-book with only one picture—the cover! How many Bibles, gentle reader, do you possess, given you by parents, brothers, sisters, friends? And how often in your days of business or amusement do you study the pictures with which its pages abound from the hands of the prophets and kings, or from those of the Divine Master Himself? Alas! alas! for too many of us it is but an ornament for the drawing-room, or piece of necessary furniture for the bedroom, to be left unopened on shelf or table until, in the agonies of grief, suffering, wrong-doing, we turn to its pages, looking for comfort in its pictures, and words of loving forgiveness. God grant that those who look, even in the eleventh hour, may not always look in vain!

Dinner was ready, and Jack had returned. They took their places at the table, and he did his best to rouse Laura and make her eat, in which effort he was not very successful, although, to please him, she struggled bravely to swallow a few mouthfuls.

The conversation during the repast was very general on his part, and very monosyllabic on hers. The nearest approach in Jack's remarks to anything that could show he knew in the least how she had been passing her time since they had last met on the banks of the Tavy, was the "How did you like Paris?" which had slipped out inadvertently before he could stop himself.

Laura looked pained and confused, and replied, slowly, "Oh, very well, thanks," and no more was said on the subject.

When dinner was over, and they were left alone, Jack, who felt in rather a better humour with himself and the world generally than he had done before, drew a couple of chairs to the fire, and said kindly to Laura:

"Now come, Laura, and tell me all about it. That's to say, tell me as much as you like about all you have done since I saw you last, and the cause of your present distress. I have not forgotten," he continued, "my promise to be a friend to you if ever you wanted help, and I mean it now as much as I did when I made it. First of all, tell me where you are living, and how you knew I was here?"

"I am living at Saltash at present, and have been there for the last three weeks. I knew you were here by seeing it mentioned in the paper this morning."

Here Laura stopped speaking, and, locking her hands together tightly, seemed to be summoning up all the energy and resolution she possessed to enable her to continue. Jack watched her curiously, but said nothing, and presently she went on:

"I must ask you a question, Mr. Treleaven; was the gunner Fox who attacked you the same William Fox who served on board Mr. Triscott's ship the *Raven?*"

"Yes," said Jack.

"Ah! I feared so. I knew he had become a warrant officer, for Captain Hemmings told me so one day when taunting me with my former friendship for him, saying that my low acquaintance would soon be out of the way. Poor William! He was very fond of me once, but I shall never see him again. I have no one—no one left to care what becomes of me. I ought to be dead." She was beginning

to speak excitedly, and Jack, dreading another outburst, interrupted her hastily.

"Hush! hush! Laura, you must not speak like that—you have many friends still, I hope, and Fox I know to be a true one. His attack upon me which you have read about in the papers was the result of a mistake—no matter what the cause, that is a purely personal matter between us—and we are now warm friends. Although, poor fellow, I am sorry to say, he is about to be tried by court-martial for it; he would not have been if I could have got him off, but that was impossible, as it was a breach of naval discipline. I trust his sentence may be light. If it is only dismissal from his ship, that he will not care about, for he told me his only object on earth was to know what had become of you, and he will thus be free to institute the search I know he intended making for you, and which, if you think fit, you may save him. But you have told me nothing about yourself yet, Laura."

"What is there to tell you?" she said, bitterly. "Captain Hemmings, after doing all in his power to make me love him, persuaded me to leave my home with him for a life of shame. I suppose he did it in a fit of jealousy after he saw you carrying me through the river that day. I know now that he never really cared for me. While I thought he loved me, I was happy enough. He was everything in the world to me. I was discontented and miserable at home; and, when he asked me to go away with him, I thought he loved me so that we should be married in a little time, and he would make a lady of me. Then we came back to Paris, and since that time I have only seen him twice. At both meetings he spoke harshly

to me and told me 'I was a curse to him.' It was hard when I had given up all for him. When I told you I was going to become a governess I spoke the truth; but he would not hear of it, and I was too much bound up in him to go against his inclinations. By this morning's post I received that letter," handing it across to Jack. "Read it and tell me whether I have not reason enough to drive me to despair or to worse."

She dropped her face upon her hands with a groan, and went on, speaking more to herself than to Jack:

"Abandoned! Cast aside! Where can I fly to hide my wretched face? And I loved him—before God I loved him!"

Jack read the letter. It was about as heartless a production as man ever penned—very short—saying it would be to their mutual advantage to see no more of each other, and offering her five hundred pounds on condition that she would never make any attempt to see him again. It was indeed enough to make a girl who would—but for the unprincipled man who wrote it—have been still a good girl, wretched with a wretchedness beyond all words.

She took the letter back from Jack, whose face expressed all the disgust he felt, and cast it into the centre of the blazing fire.

"There, Captain Hemmings," she said, as she watched the last dying sparks of the paper. "May I also burn as black as those ashes, if ever I touch one penny of your dirty money. Much as I have loved you, my love dies with that burnt paper. That you may be punished and die a violent death, and be as powerless to save yourself in your hour of need, is a fate too good for you, for you are without mercy. Are you surprised at me, Sir John Treleaven?"

turning her large, tragic eyes full on him. "Do you think me wicked to speak like this? Yes, I am wicked—terribly, terribly wicked—but, oh! the agonies of remorse I have suffered."

It was sad to see this utter abandonment of grief and misery in one so young and fair; and Jack felt that Hemmings would merit any evil that might happen to him for the ruin he had wrought. He now did his best to quiet and comfort the poor girl, and, as soon as she had become somewhat calmer, he asked her what were her present intentions, recommending her if possible to return to her parents' house. This she said was impossible—she could never face the parents whom she had outraged by her folly.

"My father," she said, "would, I am sure, never receive me under his roof, even if I were not too much ashamed to ask him to do so."

"In that I think you are wrong," said Jack, "for poor Fox told me that your father's sole wish was to find you again, and to induce you to return, and that he would, he was certain, pardon all."

"No, no!" cried Laura, "I couldn't do it, poor father. But what shall I do? I am not yet a sufficiently abandoned wretch to throw all decency to the winds, though heaven knows what I may become in time. But what other course have I left open to me, than in my misery to rush headlong to the destruction I have prepared for myself? No respectable employment that is worth having can be obtained without a character. Even a cook or a housemaid requires a better one than that the cruel world, without one atom of pity, now gives me. Alas! alas! how wretched I am!"

Jack was at his wits' end for some means of distracting the unfortunate girl's mind from the helpless contemplation of her own woes, when the idea occurred to him that he might as well tell her the reason of Fox's attack upon himself, and of his determination to come to her assistance as soon as he could leave the ship. It would at least divert her attention for the time.

"Well," said he, "as you cannot go home, I should recommend your staying at Saltash for a few days. If you are in want of money, I can give you some; which you will repay me some day, you know," he added, as she made a violent gesture of dissent. "We shall hear what has become of poor Fox in a day or two. And now I may as well tell you that it was his love for you that caused him to assault me, from a mistaken belief, in which all the world shares, that it was I who led you astray."

Laura gasped for breath.

"You? You? And have you had your name dragged down by being associated with a wicked creature like me? Oh, how could that be? You, who are the only friend I have left, to be maligned for my sake! You too must hate me, and never wish to see or hear of me again."

"Don't talk like that, Laura," said Jack, severely. "You know I am not that sort of man. If I hated you I should not be here speaking to you now, and offering you my advice. Yes, it was our meeting at Newton the day you left that caused the report I referred to. It certainly has caused me some little inconvenience," he continued, thoughtfully; "but it was not your fault, so we need not dwell upon that. I was speaking of Fox. You know I really am your friend. Will you follow my advice, then,

and wait at Saltash? At any rate until he returns to England. If he is dismissed from his ship, as is probable, that will be soon. I will let him know where you are. He, being an intimate friend of your father, and devotedly attached to yourself, is the person most likely to be able to effect a reconciliation between you and your friends, which is certainly requisite whether you choose to go home afterwards or not. In the meantime, I will look about for some comfortable situation for you, if not at home, perhaps on the Continent, where I have many friends. Till you obtain it, you can borrow my money without scruple, and I will come and see you from time to time, to tell you how things go on. And now, good night. Think about this, and tell me in the morning before you take the train out to Saltash what are your resolutions. I myself am going up to town by the 'Dutchman.' So we can breakfast together, if not too early for you, at a quarter to eight. But stay a minute before you go to your room;" and, getting his cheque-book, Jack filled in a cheque for one hundred pounds. Folding it up, he said with a smile, as he gave it to her, "You need not look at this now, but, when you do, remember it is your own money, and do not burn it as you did that letter just now—good night. Try to sleep, a rest will do you good. I must go downstairs and have a smoke. Ring the bell, and the maid will show you your room."

And Jack was gone, much relieved at the termination of the harrowing scenes he had just gone through, and with the sense of having done a meritorious action, before Laura had time for the heartfelt expressions of gratitude which were springing to her lips. Let us hope he enjoyed his pipe. "Virtue," we are told, "is its own reward."

And now let us see how the virtuous behaviour of this

British subaltern—for we hope that our readers will agree that it has been virtuous—is likely to be rewarded.

Next morning, business letters rendered his early departure impossible. Word was sent to Laura in her room that she might defer her breakfast until a later hour than that fixed overnight. This, after long hours of sleepless tossing, she was glad to be able to do; and the miserable girl, in consequence of the delay, gained a few hours' repose.

It was twelve o'clock when she and our hero left the hotel-door together, intending to cross the road to the Millbay station. As they were descending the step, a little party of three people, issuing from the station-door opposite, came across the narrow street to the hotel, meeting the descending couple face to face. A momentary recognition on both sides; no salutation on either, barring the coldest possible, hardly worthy of the name. These three, two ladies and one gentleman, were Ada Triscott, Miss Trefry, and George Triscott. The latter alone knew by appearance the young lady accompanying Sir John Treleaven, but it is highly probable that he did not withhold the information from the others; for of course the ladies asked:

"Who is she?"

Unless, Mr. Jack, you are utterly careless what is thought of you by Ada, it would perhaps have been as well had you left those business letters alone, and gone as you intended by the "Dutchman."

Another little incident, just to exemplify the adage of "virtue rewarded!" Three days after this, Mrs. Mansfield, the lady who had seen Jack and Laura together at Newton Abbot station, happened to be in the branch Bank of

England in Plymouth. The manager, for the time being, chanced to be a friend and fellow gossip of hers. Taking up a cheque which lay on the counter, he pushed it across to her, saying, as he pointed to the signature :

"I think you know this young baronet, Mrs. Mansfield? What a pity that he should have got into a scrape of this sort ! '

Mrs. Mansfield read the cheque. It was one for one hundred pounds, and payable to the order of Laura Luscombe ! Turning it over, she perceived the young lady's name signed in full on the back. Mrs. Mansfield went back to Horrabridge with a fresh proof for her daughter Blanche of the truth of the scandal about Sir John Treleaven.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANGRY HEARTS.

THE cause of the Triscotts' sudden reappearance in Plymouth was an unforeseen one. On the previous evening, George Triscott had had a stroke of good luck. At the conclusion of the day's shooting, he had found a telegram awaiting him in the house. He had not yet been home long enough to wish to get another ship; and yet this was what he and the two girls dreaded might be its import, as they stood irresolutely eyeing the ominous yellow envelope. These yellow envelopes! are they not frequently obnoxious to soldier and sailor alike? Savouring of leave stopped, sudden orders to India or the West Coast—in fact, always to be mistrusted.

"Confound it!" said George, "I'm sure it's to order me off again. I'm afraid to open it!"

"Give it me," said Rose, "I'll open it. We may as well know the worst at once."

Suiting the action to the word, and with more apparent anxiety than she generally thought it "good form" to display about anything, Miss Trefry tore open the cover. A pleasant surprise was the result. The telegram was from the admiral, newly appointed commander-in-chief at

Plymouth, who happened to be an elder brother of George's late captain on board the *Raven*. It offered George Triscott the flag lieutenancy. In the event of his accepting, he was to proceed at once to Devonport, and to get Admiralty House ready for the reception of the admiral and his family.

Of course George accepted this piece of good fortune, which meant for him several years of home service and possible promotion at the end of it. When George had been only a midshipman on board the *Satellite*, the new commander-in-chief had commanded that vessel, then cruising on the Pacific station. Being a sportsman himself, and finding young Triscott intelligent in all appertaining to sport, the then captain, now Admiral Redvers, had been wont, when at Mazattan or Vancouver, to take the young fellow ashore with him. Either when shooting the curious hares that frequent the former place, or if engaged in slaying the deer or the salmon at the latter island, George had acquitted himself in a way that delighted the heart of his skipper, who had never since forgotten him.

It was due, however, to the excellent report he had had of Triscott from his brother when one day he had enquired of him, "How the youngster he liked so much formerly was getting on as a sailor?" that Admiral Redvers had determined, unsolicited, to make him his flag lieutenant, to the rejection of others who had nothing but interest to fit them for the post.

The appointment broke up the party at Tristillian. Luckily for George all the shooting was done before he got this notice to move. Rose said it was impossible that George could make proper arrangements to render

Admiralty House fit for occupation by ladies, without the assistance of some of the sex; and, as he was of the same opinion, it was agreed that the two girls should accompany him to Plymouth, and with him occupy the house in Tamar Terrace, until joined by William Triscott; after that they would repair to Penallyn Hall for Christmas. Thus had come about the *rencontre* on the steps of the "Duke of Cornwall," where, as proper notice had not been given to have the house prepared for them, the trio proposed stopping a night. It was the merest chance that Hemmings had not also been of the party. Fortunately, however, although he had accompanied his *fiancée* and the others to the Millbay station, he had, on arrival, immediately taken a cab and driven down to the "Admiral's Hard" to rejoin his ship. Thus, fortunately, what might have caused a painful scene, where so many interests, loves, and hates were concerned, had Hemmings but crossed the road with the Triscotts, was by the merest chance avoided. There were aching hearts enough as it was. Of course Ada had taken in every detail of Laura's dress, face, and figure in this momentary meeting, and of course, after it was over, she felt she hated Jack's companion, knowing instinctively who she was even before her cousin had asked of George:

"Is that the girl?" And received the reply:

"Yes, that is Miss Luscombe."

Miss Trefry elevated her chin, and, with an air of frigid contempt, possible only to a well-bred and well-brought-up Englishwoman, said:

"Then I think Sir John Treleaven has either very little knowledge of the world, or else he is a more hardened reprobate even than I thought him, to appear publicly in a

place where he is so well known with that disreputable woman."

Ada turned very white, but said nothing; she had nothing to say. What did it matter to her? What was Sir John Treleaven to her that she should take any interest in his actions? Was she not the promised bride of another? Had she not with her own lips told him so no longer ago than yesterday? Oh! but he was taking a terrible revenge upon her. What a raging storm of angry passion was in her heart! But two short months ago nothing would have persuaded her that she could ever be capable of such feelings. She could never afterwards tell which she had felt most in the presence of the girl whom he had led astray—a feeling of intense hatred or of infinite pity for her, or whether her sensations towards Jack partook most of hatred, or passionate, jealous love. One thing she knew—of one thing she felt a cold and sickening certainty—that she had for herself made a miserable mistake in promising to marry Richard Hemmings. But the mistake was made and so was the promise, and no mean self-commiseration should ever tempt her to break it. Her pride—a ruling passion in Ada—was galled at the thought that the world should know that she was breaking her heart about a man who, while professing to love her, had first proposed to one woman, and then vilely seduced a second. "It was beneath her even to think of him." But in spite of the concluding phrase, which she repeated constantly to herself, there was all that day a strange glitter in her usually soft and lustrous eyes which was but the slight outward token of the madness that raged in her heart. A very different feeling this to any she had ever experienced before; even when she had overheard

the proposal in the grotto. Then she had been grieved—now she was affronted, maddened, and enraged. She felt fit to do any desperate action, and was positively afraid of being left alone with her own thoughts. All day her fingers were twitching to grasp a knife, and with one blow end her misery. End it! Death itself could not end it! Truly she had loved this man!

When Captain Hemmings came up from his ship that afternoon to see his *fiancée*, he could not understand her nervous, excited state. But what he could understand was that, for the first time in her life, she was rude, and aggressively so. She treated him to the curtest of answers, and delivered them in a manner which seemed to show that his presence was distasteful to her. When, rather astonished, he in turn showed that he did not like such treatment, some of the rage that was inwardly consuming her burst out, and, stamping on the floor, she told him if he did not like her manner he had better stop away altogether; and then, ashamed and miserable, Ada fled from the room.

Captain Hemmings turned in vain to Rose Trefry for some explanation of this exhibition of a temper he had never supposed Ada capable of possessing.

When he had left her a few hours before, her manner had been, if not exactly affectionate, at least as friendly as usual; he returned to find her become a perfect fury—a nice commencement this for an engagement!

Miss Trefry either would not, or could not, give any explanation beyond saying:

"That she thought her cousin was unwell, that she had been very silent all day and refused to eat anything," which lent a semblance of truth to this theory.

To tell the truth, Rose had very strong suspicions as to the cause of Ada's agitation, but she was too much of a woman of the world to question her, or pretend to take any notice. She was fond of Ada, and though somewhat toughened by the wear and tear of several London seasons, she was not entirely unfeeling nor unsympathetic.

But she had made up her mind that Ada must marry Captain Hemmings; it was a most desirable match, and would, she was sure, be for her happiness in the end. And now, she would not put her finger in the pie, and perhaps make mischief. "Least said was soonest mended!" Indeed, it was possible that Captain Hemmings had said or done something to annoy her cousin! This Captain Hemmings indignantly denied. And Rose had no more suggestions to make; so, after a few commonplace remarks, he was obliged to take his leave.

Miss Rose sat on in the empty drawing-room, with her piece of crewel-work in her lap; a smile hovered on her lips as she inwardly congratulated herself on her tact and discretion.

"Tell him of our having met Sir John and that horrid little wretch! No, indeed, I'm not so stupid." And then her thoughts turned on the "horrid little wretch." "A pretty little wretch too"—Rose could not help acknowledging this, even to herself—"and so they had been staying at the hotel since the day before." She had found this out from her brother, who in his anger against Treleaven had been easily misled by a remark from the confidential waiter, who was no doubt anxious to show his intimate acquaintance with the baronet and his doings. "Upon my word," thought Rose, "it is the greatest piece of impudence I've ever heard of. It's downright disgusting

to be in this hotel. I suppose they're coming back here! Only it's too late, I'd go out of it now."

But nothing must be said to Ada to worry her now, and Rose, stifling her virtuous wrath, went to try to get Ada to take some tea.

Captain Hemmings walked slowly back to his ship, racking his brains to think what had happened to put Ada into such a vixenish humour; but he could think of nothing to account for it. He had no notion of taking her at her word and stopping away altogether. No! on the contrary, he felt rather a deeper admiration for her after this little display of temper.

"How magnificent she looks when in a rage!" said he to himself. And he never said anything truer. With the heightened colour of her cheek, which left nothing but a pearly band of white skin against her jet-black and luxuriant hair; with her head thrown back defiantly, her eyes flashing and nostrils dilated; with bosom heaving and hands clenched, Ada looked no longer a girl, soft and tender, made to be petted and caressed; she looked a splendid woman, and one with whom it would be dangerous to trifle.

As Richard Hemmings strode moodily away, he too was secretly congratulating himself on having broken with Laura, although he was by no means sure of having quite done with that young lady yet.

"I should not care," he was thinking, "after this specimen of what Ada can be, that she should at any time discover that little *liaison*, if it still continued. I fancy I might under such circumstances be made to pass a very *mauvais quart d'heure!* for it is evident, that whatever the cause may be, Ada has in her a something

dangerous when roused. By Jove!" he continued, "how beautiful she did look just now!"

Hemmings was a man with whom physical beauty went a great way, and he was on the whole rather pleased at having discovered it in Ada in a new form. It flattered his vanity to think that henceforth so much beauty was to belong to him alone. He was a man fond of variations. He tired of a woman if he found her ever the same, as had been the too loving and trusting Laura. Of a calm, calculating temperament himself, he even secretly determined that, when they were married, he would occasionally do his best to rouse Ada to the state of mind in which he had found her this afternoon, that he might have the pleasure of contemplating at his leisure that phase of her beauty. But he was a great deal too cautious to dream of provoking any such scenes before she was irrevocably his.

"Time enough," he thought, "to make her pay for this unwarrantable flare-up when she is Mrs. Hemmings—then I shall not mind if I occasionally make her look angry again!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MEETING IN GEORGE STREET

A DAY or two after this, Ada and Rose were doing a little shopping in George Street previous to their departure for Penallyn. They were unaccompanied by either George or Hemmings, having, it being a band afternoon, given them a rendezvous at the magnificent Guildhall a little later on, when the band would cause all the inhabitants of the "three towns," who were anybody or nobody, to assemble in that splendid building.

The two girls were just coming out of Spearman's well-known shop, where they had been to see if the "Royal Devonshire Serge" was really as good an article as the advertisement in the *Graphic* and other papers would have us believe. We conclude that the inspection was satisfactory, as they had given extensive orders for serge dresses of the warmest description, calculated to resist the strongest Cornish blasts.

As they emerged from the shop, Ada was nearly knocked down by a young lady hurrying down the street towards the four-faced clock known as "Derry's clock," which stands at the crossing below. Nellie Watson—for it was she — without evincing the smallest surprise, commenced, in her usual brusque manner;

"What, Ada Triscott, that you? Glad to see you, but you ought to have better manners than to get in a young woman's way when she's going to meet her young man. Haven't seen you since the picnic. Dear me, what a long time ago that was!"

Ada was not so ready, as Nellie appeared to be, to forget that, at the said picnic, she had been decidedly ungracious to her friend at parting. She was a little taken aback, so simply said:

"How do you do, Nellie?" adding, "my cousin Rose," by way of an introduction, which was acknowledged by Nellie with a casual nod, and:

"I think we've met before, Miss Trefry, haven't we?" for Nellie never forgot faces or names. "Come along, Ada, and be introduced to my young man; he's been waiting for me underneath the four-faced deceiver for the last half-hour at least. Such a nice little Joey as he is, too! It's a shame to try his constancy any longer."

The girls both laughed, while Ada, finding her tongue, said:

"What, Nellie, have you taken to the Marines?"

"Why not?" said Miss Watson. "I assure you no respectable young woman can be without a young man in these days. Can she, Miss Trefry? And so, as since Jack Treleaven's been away I've not had one fit for anything, I'm educating my little marine to fill his place. By-the-bye, have you seen Jack Treleaven lately?"

Nellie had not yet learned anything that had transpired since she had herself despatched that gentleman from Horrabridge station with her blessing and a packet of sandwiches, honestly hoping that things would come right between him and Ada Triscott. The question was put

plainly therefore, looking Ada straight in the face the while.

"No, yes, no—that is, twice," replied Ada, confusedly, and colouring painfully as she answered.

Rose Trefry groaned in spirit, but, true to her maxim of non-interference, held her tongue and left Ada to fight her own battle.

"'No, yes, no—that is, twice!' Well, that's a queer sort of an answer. It may do for the inhabitants of South Devon or Cornwall, but I'm afraid we Plymothians are not educated up to the pitch that we can understand its ambiguity. What do you mean, Ada?"

"I mean that I have seen Sir John Treleaven, but have hardly exchanged two words with him. Nor am I ever anxious to speak to him more. A man who has behaved as he has must not be surprised if he forfeits his friends," replied Ada, haughtily, and quite unhesitatingly now; "and," she continued, "I am surprised, Nellie, that you should care to mention his name."

"Hoity-toity, what rubbish!" said Nellie—but at this juncture the "young man" was seen approaching. "Go away," said Nellie, imperiously, "I don't want you yet. No, come back," as he was meekly obeying. "There, Miss Trefry, Mr. Jackson. Now you two can talk to one another while I am having it out with Ada."

In spite of her usual *aplomb*, Miss Trefry was slightly astonished at this sudden introduction to the "Joey;" but she had to take Hobson's choice, and talk to him or nobody, for Nellie had carried Ada off up the street again. We will follow them and their conversation, leaving Rose and her marine, who was a sensible, good-looking young fellow enough, or he would have been no friend of Nellie

Watson's, to make the best of each other. Nellie was speaking.

"Now, then, Ada, what do you mean about Jack? Surely you don't believe that cock-and-bull story about the maid of the mill?"

"I am sorry to say that not only is it impossible to do otherwise than mistrust him, but also that it is no cock-and-bull story at all. I am forced to believe it whether I will or no. I *must* believe the evidence of my eyes, and I am reluctantly obliged to own that with my own eyes I have seen the most convincing proof of his shocking behaviour."

Poor Ada! She looked as she felt, sad and grieved.

Nellie opened her eyes very wide indeed at this statement, and was about to speak when she was interrupted.

"I want to ask you a question, Nellie. Did Jack" (the old familiar name came to her lips in spite of herself) "did Jack ever propose to you?"

It was now Nellie's turn to blush; but, as they had turned down a side street, fortunately there was no one to note and chronicle such an unusual phenomenon as Miss Watson in the act of blushing. Nellie stopped short, and, looking Ada straight in the face, replied:

"No, Ada, never! Why do you ask?"

"I thought I heard him do it at the picnic," said Ada, stiffly; for she imagined Nellie was telling her a lie. "George and I were driven by the rain under a tree in front of a little cave. I heard your voices, and he seemed to me to be proposing to you. We were not eavesdropping, but he spoke so plainly that I heard more than I wanted to before I could get away."

"My dear child," said Nellie, "I am so sorry. This,

then, accounts for your estrangement from him after that day. It was only a joke—a joke of doubtful taste, perhaps —I am afraid some of my jokes are. I had got tired of his eternal fish talk, and told him to say something interesting. He could think of nothing, so I told him to propose to me. He did as he was told, but, as he didn't put sufficient passion into it, I made him do it over and over again. I think he did so altogether nine or ten times, in different styles, and I refused him as regularly. I wonder which proposal it was you heard?" and Nellie smiled rather sadly at the recollection.

"It was very real," said Ada. "It must have been the tenth proposal. I did not wait for your reply, and have wondered what it was ever since. It makes no matter one way or the other now, though. I myself am engaged to be married!" This with a heavy sigh.

"Well, Ada, since you tell me that, it shows that you cannot have cared very much about Jack. Indeed, if you ever had, you would have taken the trouble to have asked either him or me sooner what you have asked me now. We should not have told you lies. It isn't in our line. I am not given to expressing my feelings, but let me tell you this—I have such an opinion of Jack Treleaven's honour, and I know him to be such a thorough gentleman, that had he been in earnest that day in the cave, instead of in jest, I should, whether I accepted him or not, have considered that he was conferring an honour upon me in asking me to become his wife. But I knew then as I know now that he loves you and no one else. When that story was set on foot of his running away with Laura Luscombe, I found it impossible to believe the strong circumstantial evidence brought against him. But it was strong, and I was

at last forced in part to believe it. I thought perhaps in his soft-heartedness—for he is very soft-hearted—that he might have been wheedled into it by the designing little girl herself, who, anxious to make a noise and to attract attention, was willing, as she could not be a lady, to do so even at the loss of her own good name, by running away with so well-known and popular a man as Jack Treleaven. I believed she was capable of it, if only to spite me; for she hated me as the devil does holy water. I do not entirely blame her for that either, it has been my fault. I might have shown her a little more consideration upon the few occasions on which I have come in contact with her. Who knows, but that by treating her kindly, instead of snubbing her, I might have prevented her falling into the hands of the scoundrel who has wrecked her life? I am afraid to name him now, Ada, lest I should at the same time name the man who is your intended husband. Don't interrupt me, you can speak presently. Mind! you have not told me who he is yet, and I may be mistaken in my surmises; but what I wish to impress upon you is that Jack Treleaven is not the villain; and that he never did—except as a passing acquaintance—have anything to say to this Miss Luscombe. Much less has he been the destroyer of herself, and of all peace and comfort in her father's home. No, Ada Triscott, you have made a great mistake—you have, without properly investigating or, as far as I know, asking a single question of Sir John Treleaven himself, accepted the popular version of a public scandal. By so doing, you have, whether you loved him or not, thrown over an honest heart that I firmly believe beat alone for you. And now you tell me you are engaged to be married. You, who were a short time ago notoriously in love with one man, have now gone headlong

to your destruction by engaging yourself to another, and one who is not fit for the society of either women or men of honour. Ada Triscott, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Nellie was white with emotion. As she went on, she became more and more worked up. She was very different to the "chaffy" Nellie Watson of every day now. Filled with the righteousness of her cause; anxious for Jack's happiness, which she esteemed far higher than her own; anxious to save Ada from falling into the hands of a villain; no wonder if she was moved! No wonder that she spoke earnestly!

Ada, too, was white and trembling. What was she to believe—to understand? What did Nellie mean by these stories against the man she was to marry? although it might be a mistake yet, for she had not named him. Oh! if only she could believe in Jack's innocence as painted to her by this his staunchest friend. But she must reply. Although, with her own eyes, she had beheld the proofs of Jack's guilt, it yet behoved her to hear the name that Nellie withheld from her.

"Nellie Watson," she said, at length, "I am but a young girl, and may have been very foolish. You are a woman of the world; and you have spoken to me as woman never spoke yet. Explain your meaning, and name the man you have been hinting at. This is due to me."

"Come into the main street, I shall tell you there, for there we shall part, I suppose. And now," said she, as they regained George Street, "the name of Laura Luscombe's destroyer and your future husband are, I believe, one and the same—Richard Hemmings, commander of the *Adelaide*."

At that moment, Hemmings, who had been looking for Ada, came up to them.

"Ask him," said Nellie, and without the slightest sign in return for his salute, she swept past him towards the Guildhall.

CHAPTER XXV

HEMMINGS THE IMMACULATE!

IT was fortunate for Captain Hemmings that he turned up just as he did, for perhaps, had he been a little longer before making his appearance, Nellie might have supported her assertion with some proofs, or with a force of conviction equal to proof. As it was, the only effect of her sudden statement was to take poor Ada's breath away. Ada had quite unconsciously been pleased to hear Jack praised by Nellie, and to hear the assertion made by the latter of his innocence. But when it came to accusing Hemmings—why, then, she simply did not believe that Nellie knew what she was talking about.

Ada had always looked upon Richard Hemmings as the very soul of honour. Indeed, it was as much from the high estimate she had formed of his character, both from what she had personally seen of him, and from her brother George's praises, as from any other reason that she had accepted his proffered love. Had Nellie been really anxious to convince Ada, she should have chosen another manner and greater deliberation in her manner of doing it. It is not easy for any one to believe in an instant that the person, who has always seemed to behave honourably and openly, is no more than a villain and a scoundrel; nay,

more, if the one thus accused happens to be on the spot, ready and willing to refute the charge made against him as a calumny, the chances are considerably in favour of his being believed rather than the calumniator.

This was what Hemmings did.

Ada, in her agitation, and in reply to his inquiry: "What was the matter with Miss Watson?" told him everything that had just transpired.

Astonished as he was that Nellie should know the truth, he did not lose his presence of mind. The line he took was to treat Miss Watson's utterances as those of a mad woman, to whose random words no credit should be given. He did not fail to dwell upon her habitual eccentricity, and affected to pity her for what he pretended to regard as a complete breakdown of her nervous system and brain-power. He did not fail to support the statement of his own innocence with regard to Laura—whom he said he hardly knew by sight—by lying freely about Jack Treleaven. It had grieved him much, he said, to see her in Jack's company at Paris, etc., etc.

All these lies were the more easily believed by Ada, owing to the unlucky *rencontre* with our hero and Miss Luscombe at the door of the "Duke of Cornwall Hotel," of which also she now apprised Captain Hemmings. He thanked his stars silently that fortune had played such a card into his hands. And well he might! He made the very best use of it.

When he found that he had sufficiently imposed upon Ada's credulity, to have no further fears for the present, he said in conclusion, with an eye to the future:

"And now, my dear Ada, I think I must ask you to promise not to have any more communication with Miss

Watson, either personally or by letter. It is evident that she is touched in her head, and her line of insanity is a most dangerous one. Pitying her and her delusions much as I do, I think it advisable, for the sake of the peace of mind of both of us, that you should listen to no more of her ravings. So promise me, darling, that you will not."

Ada gave the required promise. Indeed, she could not otherwise account for the attack made upon her *fiancé*, than in the way that Hemmings did.

"Poor Nellie!" she thought, "she must indeed be quite off her head."

But, for all Captain Hemmings' apparent composure, he was inwardly greatly disturbed at the turn affairs had taken.

"Who knows," thought he, "but that this girl will make mischief with others, who will take more pains to investigate the truth of her statements, than does Ada herself?"

As a precautionary measure, he hurried the departure of Miss Trefry and herself into Cornwall, persuading the latter, who was by no means loth to leave Plymouth, that it would be as well if she arrived a day or two before her uncle at Penallyn, which had been so long unoccupied. He himself accompanied them the next day on the long and tedious journey to Penzance, from whence they were within a drive of Mr. Triscott's residence. Hemmings also thought it necessary to tell George what had happened.

George was, as we know, an intimate friend of the Watsons; but he was disgusted at Nellie's conduct, believing, as he did, that it was Jack Treleaven alone who had been concerned in the *enlèvement* of which Nellie

accused his future brother-in-law. There is nothing like having the first word in any important subject!

After George had talked it all over with Hemmings, Nellie Watson might have sworn until she was black in the face, but anything she could have said to the commander's detriment would not have been believed by George Triscott. He, too, thought Nellie must be a little cracked, or that she had been made the victim of some gross misrepresentations on the part of Sir John Treleaven.

"If it is his fault," said George, referring to Jack, "I think it infernally mean of him; personally I don't care what the fellow does, or who he runs away with; if he ran away with every woman in the place, it wouldn't matter to me, since I have ceased to reckon him as one of my acquaintances. But, Hemmings, old fellow, I do think that for him to saddle his misdoings on you is about one of the meanest things I ever heard of. Of course, though, you have my sympathy, and will have my uncle's also, for I shall tell him, you know, old fellow; but your character is too well assured for any one to believe a word of it, so it really doesn't matter. I shouldn't bother my head about it if I were you."

Captain Hemmings of course expressed his gratitude for his friend's sympathy on the occasion of his being so traduced by the fair Nellie. He also agreed with George that the conduct of a man who would deliberately saddle another with an affair that he had committed himself was "d——d mean!" Poor George! he little thinks what a fool his friend is making both of himself and his sister while thus reciprocating his indignation.

"I wish Mollie Watson was here now," continued George: "she has some sense. If she comes back, I shall

tell her that that fellow has been lying to her sister and making a fool of her."

"I think you had better not, old fellow," replied his companion. "Unless she starts the subject, it is better to let sleeping dogs lie. And perhaps, after all, this is just some sudden little spite emanating from Nellie Watson's cracked brain, of which her sister neither knows nor will hear anything. You know, that fellow proposing to her when you and Ada overheard him may have had something to do with it. It is possible that Miss Watson, unhappy in her own love affair—for I conclude it was one with this Treleaven—is now trying to pay off some old spite against poor Ada, who of course we both know did, for a time, have some little weakness for him; your uncle foolishly encouraging him about the house, not knowing what sort of fellow he was. Upon my word, not the sort of man I would care to let near my sisters. However, don't let's say any more about it."

So far Hemmings had come out of it well, thoroughly well, having, as the result of Nellie Watson's accusation, earned the increased confidence of the whole Triscott family.

George had plenty to do these times, so, although a few days before Christmas Mollie Watson returned to her paternal mansion, he did not go out to see her. Rose Trefry had also, by her captivations at Tristillian, served in a great measure to eliminate any old softness this young sailor might have felt in his particularly susceptible heart towards Mollie Watson. He was now quite convinced that his cousin Rose was the only one he had ever loved, and the one girl who could make him happy. He did not in the least mind being patronised by her—rather liked it, on the con-

trary. If she told him he had no manners, and was only a rough sailor, he agreed heartily with her, and would tell her "that she alone could improve him and make him fit for the *grand monde* of which she was the brightest ornament." Ada began to think that George must be really in love this time. Rose was sure of it. But then her naïve belief in herself and her attractions, which really were considerable, was quite enough to cause this assurance. George was almost sure of it too; but then he had been sure in so many different cases before that when, one day, he confided the fact to an old chum and shipmate, who had served with him for four years on board the *Raven*, he was met with an intolerably aggressive fit of laughter from his "pal." George had never been able to keep his love affairs to himself, and they had always been a standing joke with his brother officers.

"Really in love at last, are you, old man?" said his friend. "I'd like to know when you ever were anything else but 'really in love'? Let's see," telling them off on his fingers as he mentioned the ladies' names. "There was the fair Lucy during the month we were detained at Gibraltar. There was Miss Watson before we sailed—that's two. There was that pretty planter girl you and Dickson came to loggerheads about at Colombo—that's three. There was Minnie Hodgson, the merchant's daughter, who quite did for you at Singapore—that's four. There was that lovely snuff-coloured creature at Hong Kong, whom you vowed you would make Mrs. Triscott—only think of Snuffy, the adorable creature! while I pause before beginning the other hand. Snuffy—poor little Snuffy! Now for number six."

But number six remains unrecorded, for an act of

violence took place before she, too, could be enumerated by this gentleman of the too-retentive memory. But George remains convinced that Rose Trefry is alone the true "queen of his soul;" even Snuffy's memory is but a dream!

CHAPTER XXVI.

MOLLIE'S RETURN.

YES, Mollie had returned from her visit to Wales. It had come to a close sooner than was expected, as the old lady had caught a cold, and had made up her mind that nothing short of spending the winter at Nice or Mentone would effect a cure. She would have taken Mollie with her, but the latter struck, and with reason. For it was only on Friday that her hostess had determined on the Continental trip, and on Saturday she was gone.

Neither Mollie's wardrobe nor her inclinations warranted a departure for foreign parts on such short notice. She had also, although by no means of a sentimental turn of mind, that very English predilection for passing Christmas at home. Mollie, therefore, reappeared at Moor Lodge as suddenly, if not more so, than she had departed, much to the satisfaction of her father and Nellie. Not that the latter was very demonstrative on the occasion. It was not her way.

"Oh, you're back, are you!" had been her greeting, when, on returning from a tramp on the moor, she found Mollie, looking fresher than ever, and toasting her toes at the cheery wood fire. After a kiss, which between these really devoted sisters was a rare occurrence, the next

question was: "Well, what did old mother —— give you?" for the godmother was a generous old person.

"Tenner!" said Mollie, laconically, laughing merrily at Nellie's eye to business, "and this;" showing an old-fashioned seal, cut with a skull and cross-bones, and bearing for motto "Quis separabit."

"I like that," said Nellie, after eyeing it attentively for a minute with her head on one side, like a jackdaw or raven. "Give it to me!" and, like the jackdaw aforesaid, making a grab at, and possessing herself of the article.

"All right, old girl, you can have it," said Mollie; "it will save my getting you a Christmas present that you'd only grumble at, and making a hole in the 'tenner.' I don't care for skulls and cross-bones myself."

"Then that's settled!" said Nellie, pocketing the seal; "there'll be no end to my correspondence now, I can tell you. Won't I just skull and cross-bones my friends in the future, that's all!"

And she did "skull and cross-bones them" with a vengeance for the next few weeks, so that everybody declared, "Really, Nellie Watson gets queerer every day!"

The house at Horrabridge seemed more comfortable after Mollie's return. There was now some chance for her father to get a comfortable meal occasionally, and to be sure of his having his tea properly made in the morning. With Nellie's peculiar fits or occasional unsociability and frequent unpunctuality, in Mollie's absence, the poor man had often to forage for himself in the best way he could. As it was never any use abusing Nellie herself, the worthy man, who had been bottling up his resentment, had it all out now upon his second daughter's return; telling Mollie

"she had no idea what a good-for-nothing her sister was," and that he'd be hanged if he'd stop in the house with her alone again, but go into Plymouth and live at his club."

"I wish he would," said Nellie, "then there might be some peace and quietness in the house; he's done nothing but abuse the servants from morning till night, so that even Emma declared she would give warning. Didn't you, Emma?" addressing the gaunt and privileged hand-maiden.

She, being afraid of nobody, replied with a toss of her head, and ignoring the speaker:

"Yes; and indeed, Miss Mollie, it's been hawful since you left. Nothink to eat, nothink to drink. The master's temper frightful, and Miss Nellie's worse! Fighting like a couple of cock-sparrers all day long—it wasn't fit for a respectable person to live in the 'ouse. I was forced to tell master I should 'ave to go and live at my club too."

"Get out!" said Mr. Watson.

"Yes, sir, to my club, sir," replied Emma.

With this witticism, Emma, who was a six-footer, smiled a ghastly smile. As it spread itself over her particularly ugly but good-humoured face, she disappeared. She knew how far she could go with impunity—"like master, like servant!" It was a quaint but happy household. Even the biggest rows in that family usually ended in a joke and a laugh all round. More especially when good-natured, handsome Mollie was at home.

"Well, Emma, what's been going on?" asked Mollie, cheerily, of the six-footer next morning, that hand-maiden having, in honour of Mollie's return, come in to help her

to dress. A very unusual attention this, which Mollie thought deserved to be rewarded by giving Emma a chance of what she wanted, *i.e.*, the use of her tongue.

"Lor' bless you, miss, since you've been away we ain't lately had nobody here nice at all, barring Mr. Treleaven—Sir John, as he is now—what came to see Miss Nellie one day. I wonder she'll have anythink to say to him now, though! Hindeed, he's a queer party, although certainly a nice gentleman, and 'as been nearly murdered."

Mollie knew nothing of recent events, so here Emma had a splendid chance of telling a sensational story, which, like all people of that class, was what she loved. She was also of a romantic turn of mind, for all her height, and so thought also her young man (height five feet two inches) to whom she was always referring.

The story of Jack's adventures did not suffer by her telling, for what Emma did not know she invented. When Mollie expressed incredulity, she was immdiately told to refer to the "young man," Jack Spriggs by name—a very safe way of getting out of a difficulty. At last, Emma's version of Jack Treleaven's recent history being exhausted, Mollie asked what else had happened of note during her absence.

"Well, Miss Mollie, Captain Lifton came here the day you left 'ome, and seemed wonderful put out to find you was gone. Hit's my impression that he's in love, for he wouldn't 'ave no refreshments, nor nothink, although hi did hinvite him in."

"In love!" said Mollie, laughing, but looking away. "Why, Emma, what yarns you spin! Who on earth can Captain Lifton be in love with?"

"Well, Miss Mollie, hin my private opinion, which Jack

Spriggs always says is to be relied on, Captain Lifton, he's in love with a very 'andsome young lady, who doesn't live fifty miles from Horrabridge. Hindeed, if you was just now to look in the glass, miss, I shouldn't be very much surprised if you was to get a sight of 'er yourself."

But to look in the glass was about the very last thing Mollie cared to do at this particular moment; on the contrary, she dived her face into a basin of water, telling the excellent Emma her services were no longer required. With "an 'aughty" toss of her head somewhere near the ceiling, the romantic one went off to make some more than unusually violent and vicious bang-bangs at Nellie's door, shouting out at the top of her voice to that obdurate young lady.

"It's ten o'clock, Miss Nellie, hand hi'm just going to clear the breakfast away. You'd better come down soon, m——"

"That's a lie!" called out Nellie, flatly (as it was). "Go away, or I'll pitch the water-can at you!"

Nellie was too old a bird to be caught with chaff like this. The worthy Emma had tried it on too often before. Nellie did not intend leaving her warm bed on such a mild pretence as this; and Emma knew better than to venture within that sacred apartment uncalled for. No! recollections of booby traps laid for her with said hot-water cans were too fresh. Emma had upon the last occasion emerged from Nellie's room literally two walking yards of pump-water.

Oh, Emma! adorable friend of our youth! Shouldst thou ever in thy spare moments in Whiteley's show-rooms lay down the mantle of newest pattern, to take up this the latest thing in novels, deign, we pray thee, to remember that

in those days, ere the faithless Jack Spriggs fled headlong from thy well-merited wrath, we too loved thee well. Truly in good nature and willingness unequalled, in quaintness of expression rare, in height regal, in "cheek" remarkable—thou wast the queen of serving women!

CHAPTER XXVII.

CHRISTMAS AT MOOR LODGE.

"BUNG" was not long in hearing of Mollie's return. He had met one of Mollie's "devotees" who had just been at Horrabridge, who had apprised him of the fact.

But old "Bung" had had time for reflection. It was some time since that ball at the assembly rooms, when he had seemed to tread upon air rather than upon deal boards. In the interim he had seen Jack thoroughly unhappy. Asking himself the cause of this unhappiness on the part of his friend, the answer had been patent—Love! He felt logical. He put it into a syllogism, probably in false logic:

"Jack is unhappy because in love. I too am in love. Therefore I too shall be unhappy!"

He went on further; for he had, since the day of the "mawkin," been particularly cautious how he acted on impulse. At that time, he had, he owned to himself, acted foolishly in kicking his prostrate table about the room. But his folly had been promptly punished by that room being wrecked.

"What was the reason his room was wrecked?" Same answer—"Love!" Another syllogism: "My room was wrecked because I was in love. I am still in love. My prospects and happiness in life will be wrecked too!"

Poor old fellow! Instead of rushing out to Horrabridge by the next train, as another man would have done, he sat by himself smoking, and painting at intervals, all day. He found himself wondering why Mollie had returned so soon, and the imaginary rival again recurred to his mind.

Probably she was engaged to be married, and had come back thus early to get her trousseau. "Oh, well, after all, it will be better for me not to see her under those circumstances." And he proposed going away on leave—on long leave—on January 1st.

The end of December was nigh, and still Moor Lodge saw him not; and still he moped alone, and smoked and painted, and he had occasional "goes" of whisky-and-water. The chances were, that this thoroughly good-hearted "Bung," having left off beer and taken to whisky, would in time have gone altogether to the bad. Beer agreed with him—whisky did not. He was actually sometimes ill-tempered. If the subalterns, after their wont, and full of exuberance of spirits at their approaching departure on leave, played him any of their little tricks, he resented them. When they playfully substituted a liquid chiefly composed of salt and water, for the half-filled tumbler that stood by his side, he failed as formerly to see the joke. When the junior subaltern of his company wittily removed the arm-chair in which he was depositing himself after dinner, thereby leaving him at full-length upon the floor, Captain Lifton was positively offended. Unheard-of change! When the same young gentleman, who was a regular wag, drew a picture representing an officer lying upon the floor, apparently in a state of intoxication, a capsized brandy-and-soda tumbler lying "convanient," and merely labelled it, "Bung after mess," Captain Lifton actually had the bad taste to

remark that "he'd Bung him;" and did so by making that young gentleman, much to his surprise and disgust, do a little of the company's work, instead of, as usual, doing it all himself. Yes—without a doubt, Bung was going utterly to the bad. He could no longer enjoy practical jokes played upon himself, and considered allusions to "sign-painting" as little short of sacrilege.

The young officers did not understand it, and very properly considered themselves defrauded of their undoubted rights. However, something happened to cause a change. A note arrived for him the morning before Christmas Day, which ran as follows:

"DEAR CAPTAIN LIFTON,

"You have treated me shamefully in not coming out to see me since my return. However, if you will come and pass Christmas Day with us and stay the night, we will forgive you.

"Yours very sincerely,

"MOLLIE WATSON.

"P.S.—Emma said this morning, she was afraid she should never see you again, that you must 'ave grown 'aughty'—I hope this is not the case?"

After this note, "Bung" returned to his normal state of placidity.

Christmas morning was bright and cheerful. There had been sharp frost—a rime frost—in the night. This, together with the previous slight fall of snow, made the usual noble appearance of the tors and woods more noble still. There is a certain dignity without pride, a loftiness

without sublimity, a soft but majestic beauty, which yet conveys with it no sense of awe, peculiar to some few places in our blest isle of the sea. This could be felt and appreciated that Christmas morning by any person walking up the Down from the little station at Horrabridge.

Lovely! beautiful! what a sense of the majestic, what a spirit of religion seemed to steal over the senses while gazing entranced over that beautiful scene! Lifton was not more than the rest of us a religious man; but, as he stood upon the slope of Roborough, he took off his hat and solemnly thanked his Maker for being allowed to live upon such a glorious day.

"Ice like morsels—hoar-frost like ashes," lay scattered all around. Glittering, dazzling was the whiteness of the crystals hanging from every bough, from every spray of withered fern. He had not been to church, but here under the pure canopy of heaven he devoutly offered up his prayers.

He thought of a similar Christmas morn long ago, and of a long-lost mother's earnest prayers for his future welfare. The tears came into his eyes as he stood there bareheaded, and thought of that mother at rest in the arms of Him whose advent the joyful bells had that morning so merrily rung out. Yes, his had been for years a peculiarly solitary existence. Friendly with all, intimate with none; without kith or kin since that mother had died, and left him at the age of twenty-one sole master of his fortune and future. Latterly Jack had come into his life, far more into his life than he had known himself.

"Poor old Jack!" he thought, "I wish he was here to-day. How I miss him! I hope he will soon be happy again and forget all his troubles." And a prayer went up

from that honest heart for his chum, his almost brother. Straight it ascended, as the prayer that had so many years ago risen from a mother's loving heart for him. Truly that prayer of long ago was now bearing the desired fruit. Long he stood there in silent communion with all this beautiful surrounding nature, the reader of all hearts. Who shall say that those simple orisons, without definite form or shape, offered up on the mountain side, were not as acceptable as though uttered beneath some stately church roof, with all its sacred attributes of white-robed clergy, its studied forms and ceremonies?

Meanwhile, Lifton was observed and by mortal eyes. Returning from church and walking briskly up the hill, Nellie and Mollie could not help seeing a man hat in hand, standing on a prominent portion of the Down. Partially turned away from them, they could not at first observe his features; but, as they approached, keen-sighted Mollie recognised his figure.

"Surely it's Captain Lifton!" said she, "but what on earth is he doing with his hat off like that on this cold, frosty morning?"

"Hush! don't make a noise, Mollie," replied her sister, who had at once grasped the situation. "Nothing on *earth*, I should say, but something in heaven. Can't you see he's praying?"

They could now see his face, and were both struck with the solemnity that o'erspread those usually merry features.

"Let's pass quietly behind him," said Mollie, "I shouldn't like to disturb him."

"Yes," said Nellie, quietly, "*that's a good man.* How I wish I could pray like that;" and she sighed heavily.

Their design to pass unnoticed was unsuccessful, for one of them trod accidentally on a branch which, dry by the frost, crackled under foot. Re-covering his head, Lifton turned. The girls could see that his eyes were still wet. They greeted him quietly but warmly, and wished him a happy Christmas. In spite of their wild dispositions and random talk, both had far too good taste to allude to the manner in which he had been occupied when they came upon him.

How handsome and happy Mollie looks to-day! How dazzling her complexion, how clear her blue eyes, how straightforward her glance! Here are no put-on airs—no artificial ways; downright cordiality of welcome, without any *arrière pensée*, is stamped upon her face. She is glad to see Lifton again, and not ashamed to show it.

Nellie's friend, the young marine, and a couple of people belonging to the neighbourhood, completed the party at dinner at Moor Lodge that day. Very jolly and warm the house looked, and very tastefully was it bedecked with red-berried holly and ivy leaves.

Mistletoe, too, was not wanting, although first it seemed to be conspicuous by its absence. The fact was, there had been a difficulty in procuring that necessary adjunct to all Christmas festivities. But the stalwart Emma was not to be done. And she it was who, on account of her height, had arranged the greater part of the decorations, under the young ladies' supervision. She threatened Jack Spriggs, and he brought it; but when the plant beloved by Druids of old, and by young people of the present, was brought, there was apparently no place left in which it might be placed advantageously, every coign of vantage being otherwise occupied. Emma and the young ladies stood in consulta-

tion. The former, lost in thought, gazed lovingly on the bush she held in her hand.

"I 'ave it, Miss Nellie," she exclaimed, at last, "the very think, the halcove!"

And in the alcove she hung it up, likewise placing a sofa beneath it in the recess, which was ordinarily occupied by a hat-rack and a couple of chairs. Partially shaded by a heavy curtain, and partly concealed by a large stand of flowers, this formed about as comfortable a little hiding-place for two people as could be wished for.

Emma was a great woman in mind as well as body! Having hung the mistletoe to her own satisfaction, she did not intend that it should waste itself on the desert air. When, therefore, after dinner, the occupants of the dining-room were waiting about between the hall and the drawing-room until a few more neighbours arrived for a sociable hop, Emma beckoned Mr. Jackson, the young marine, tragically aside.

He followed her to the other end of the hall, while the others, wondering what she was up to, followed her with their eyes. Drawing aside the curtain that obscured the entrance to the alcove, the "six-footer" said, in her deepest of stage-whispers, much resembling a groan as it resounded in a deep bass monotone up the hall, pointing the while with outstretched arm:

"Hit's in there, sir; Miss Nellie 'elped to 'ang it herself."

Leaving the "Joey" blankly gazing, she had whisked away her two yards of womanhood, even before he had grasped the sibyl's meaning. Much merriment was caused in the hall by the event, but everybody was, as Emma had intended they should be, enlightened as to the whereabouts

of the mystic bush. Soon they commenced to dance, and let us hope that the imparted information was taken advantage of, as Emma's good-will deserved not to have been exerted in vain. She thought that every one who was deemed worthy of the hospitality of Moor Lodge should, on Christmas night at least, have the fullest opportunities given them of enjoying themselves.

Whether others availed themselves of the shelter of the alcove or not, one thing is certain, that, at rather an advanced period of the evening, Mollie and Lifton were comfortably ensconced upon the sofa in the recess. The others, tired of dancing, had just settled down to play round games; for this was one of those evenings when there was amusement for everybody, and everything was tried in turn.

"I thought you were never coming to see us again, Captain Lifton, and now I suppose you will be off on leave. Oh, dear! as Emma says, every one nice is going or gone;" and Mollie smiled a comical little smile, betokening the future utter bereavement of the inhabitants of Moor Lodge.

"Well, I had intended going on the first," replied our old friend, "Bung," now grown desperate and utterly forgetful of recent logical application; "but," he continued, "it depends entirely on you."

Mollie blushed brightly, and regarded the mistletoe without saying anything. "Bung" felt he must plunge. Now or never!

"Look here, Mollie—no, I mean Miss Watson—I say, you know—that is, you don't know—how can you? Well, the fact is, I don't know what to say or how to say it."

"Now, Captain Lifton," said Mollie, her heart beating frantically, "don't talk nonsense. I—I must go!" and she jumped up nervously; but Lifton had risen too, and taken hold of the hand she put up to her burning cheek.

"Mollie, Mollie, wait! I must speak—I have been so unhappy."

They were both standing directly beneath the mistletoe, and he had taken the other hand. Mollie could not raise her head, as he held her fast prisoned.

"Look up, darling," said he; "won't you give me the right to kiss you beneath this plant? Not only now, but for life."

His arm was stealing round her waist. How brave the shy Captain Lifton had become! Mollie lifted her dear, beautiful eyes to his, and he read the answer there. Never did she look handsomer than at this moment—never truer, never better. Their lips met in a long, loving kiss, and, with a contented little sigh, Mollie's head fell upon his shoulder. Oh, happiness unspeakable! surely heaven can have no purer bliss than this—of mutual first love?

About an hour after, Nellie came to drag them from their retreat, to come to supper. Nellie had felt a warning voice somewhere within her crying long ago that that repast was ready, but she had resisted its outcries until she thought the absentees had had time to get hungry too. It was a happy evening for every one, and even the little marine went away with pleasant recollections of it, though Nellie had put him through rather a severe course of training in his duties as an efficient "young man." In Nellie's thoughts alone had there been a regret.

"If only dear old Jack were here, how much jollier it would all be!"

Yes! beneath that careless exterior beat the strong, loving heart that could not even momentarily forget the loved one, although capable of that rarest and noblest of virtues—self-sacrifice.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FOX'S DETERMINATION.

CHRISTMAS was come and past. It had been celebrated at Penallyn by William Triscott in his usual hospitable manner; whether Ada had been happy or not, would be hard to say. Captain Hemmings and George had both been down for a day or two. The latter full of spirits, with all the buoyancy of an unclouded youth, had certainly contrived to make those around him, to a certain extent, catch the contagion of his mirth.

The former had exerted himself to the utmost to please his *fiancée* and everybody. As a result, she could not but feel grateful to him; but still, the thought that she did not love him as she ought to love the man who was to be her companion for life, grew heavier on her mind day by day. Feeling this, she gently opposed his express wish for an early union.

As William Triscott was also not anxious to lose his niece yet, the commander had perforce to make up his mind to wait. He was a self-reliant man, and as the days wore on he quite ceased to feel any anxiety as to the possible chance of the discovery of his late *liaison*. Indeed, after the ease with which he had persuaded the Triscott

family of the falsehood of Nellie Watson's wild statements, it did not seem as if he had much to fear.

We must now turn our attention to William Fox, whom we left last in "durance vile" at Queenstown. He had not been, as Sir John Treleaven anticipated, dismissed his ship. No, there was no such luck for him, for luck he would have esteemed it. When he received Sir John Treleaven's letter, informing him of Laura's deserted condition, he was at Bantry, where the *Hesperus* touched for last letters before proceeding on the Atlantic station. But to return. His captain had been as good as his word given to Sir John, and the charge against him had been framed as leniently as possible. As a consequence, he had simply been disrated as gunner, and reduced to the rank and pay of gunner's mate. There being, however, now no time for another gunner to be procured, he was ordered to continue to perform his former duties, with a chance held out to him, if he proved satisfactory, of being shortly reinstated in his former rank.

And Fox made up his mind that he would do his duty thoroughly. It was hopeless to think of again applying for his discharge. At such a time, and so soon after his trial, the application would not for one moment have been entertained.

The idea of deserting had crossed his mind, but was dismissed on a second's reflection. He had never yet done anything disgraceful, and did not now intend that his name should be branded as that of a deserter from Her Majesty's Service. He must stick to his ship throughout her commission, unless some honourable means of leaving it presented itself.

It was with a heavy heart that he wrote two letters before

leaving Bantry Bay. The first to Jack, the other to Laura, for his mind was filled with gloomy forebodings of what might be the fate of the girl whom he had once—ay! whom he even now loved. Friendless and alone! He shuddered to think of it.

His letters were short as was his time for writing. Jack he simply thanked for his kindness in writing to him, and for his promise that he would as far as in his power protect Laura from coming to further harm. Laura he exhorted to return home, but told her, whether she felt herself able to do that or not, that, whatever befell, she was to remember always that there was *one* who did not blame her, who had long ago forgiven her for having been so easily deceived by the honeyed words of a man who had deliberately won her heart but to trample her love in the dust. He told her that while he had a penny she should never want, and begged her to write to him frequently, if for no other reason, because it would be an occupation to her. In conclusion, he asked her if possible to send him news of the Triscotts, who had been so kind to him, could she procure information concerning them in any way.

William had his reasons for wishing to know about the Triscotts. He could now see why Captain Hemmings had been so anxious to get him off to sea again. He remembered that officer's confusion when he had asked him "whether he had seen anything of Laura in Paris?" With burning indignation the thought recurred to him of the manner in which Captain Hemmings had wilfully lied to him—a lie whereby the life of a true English gentleman had been nearly taken away, and whereby he (William Fox) had almost become the murderer of that man.

Fox now suspected that the cause of his application for

discharge having been unsuccessful, in some way lay with Captain Hemmings. In this we know he was not wrong. The reason why the commander wanted to get rid of him was now plain enough. Living so long with the Triscotts, the attentions of Captain Hemmings to Miss Triscott must have been noticeable by Fox, as indeed they were by all the servants in the household. Even before leaving Tamar Terrace, the servants had begun to draw comparisons between the naval and the military officer. The sudden banishment from the house of the latter had been, among all the dependents of the household, a theme of the freest comment, and also of some regret. His free-handed ways, as well as the fact of his being a friend of the family, had made him well liked by those who sat below the salt.

Fox therefore concluded, and rightly, that Captain Hemmings, having become aware of the interest he took in Laura, and meditating, as he probably was, a breach with that poor girl himself, considered that his (Fox's) presence in the household was dangerous in the highest degree. A mere chance might have given him that information concerning Laura which, if communicated to the Triscott family, might have upset all the commander's plans. So he must be got rid of.

With bitterness William remembered how easily he had been got rid of, by the offer of that post of gunner, which he had held for such a short time. William Fox, of course, sailing across the Atlantic, could not be aware at once of the fact of the commander's engagement to Miss Triscott. He had, however, considered such an eventuality as not improbable. When, therefore, at Rio he received a letter from Laura telling him of it (for she had learned it somehow), he was not surprised.

But he was none the less determined, that if anything that lay in his power could prevent the marriage of George Triscott's sister with a man who had behaved as Captain Hemmings had to an innocent girl, that marriage should be prevented. Miss Triscott herself had ever been too kind to him for him to see her, if he could help it, united to a villain. Then, again, he had sworn to be revenged upon the man who had wrecked the happiness of the girl who had been everything in the world to him. What better revenge could there be than to dash the man's cup of happiness from his lips—than to hold up one who had passed for a brave and honest man, a good officer and true gentleman, to the scorn of the world—to point him out as a liar and a man of no honour; as one who had thrown the blame of his own blackest of misdeeds upon the shoulders of one who had passed for his friend. Yes! he too should know what it was to feel that shame which he had brought upon a poor girl's name. He too should be degraded among his fellows! To accomplish this merited punishment would be indeed revenge; and William Fox determined that to bring it about would be henceforth the one object of his life.

But how was it to be done by him at a distance? How was this his mission of avenger to be fulfilled? Grown cautious since his misguided attack upon Sir John Treleaven, he felt that to write a simple letter would not be sufficient. Nor would a simple letter to George Triscott cause sufficiently the notoriety of ill-fame, which he determined should henceforth cling to the name of Captain Hemmings; retarding his advancement in life, and making him a by-word and a scorn among his brother officers and equals.

For this Fox knew that he must be himself on the spot—he must be supported by the most damning proofs of

this man's ill-conduct, and must, if possible, choose the most signal manner of bringing the offender to account. But how could he get home? At present it seemed likely he should remain abroad for several years, cruising about on the Atlantic station; but still he hoped, trusting in Providence, that aid might come to assist him in preserving Miss Triscott from the hands of the man whom, rightly or wrongly, he considered his greatest enemy on earth.

He managed, by communicating with Laura and others, even with George Triscott himself, to know what was going on at Penallyn; and had learned that there was no immediate prospect of the wedding. Time was flying by rapidly. The new year was now fast advancing from spring to summer; and still William had no prospect of returning to England. He was reappointed as gunner about the middle of May; but this circumstance, although satisfactory in itself, as showing the appreciation of his officers of his diligent discharge of duty, brought no relief to his mind. From constantly brooding on the one subject, he was becoming quite ill. From a robust man, he was becoming quite gaunt and thin. To add to his distress of mind, he ceased to receive letters from Laura. This was a fresh care. For three or four weeks, though often in port at various places in the West Indies, he received never a line. He imagined all sorts of things about her; we need not here attempt to particularise his various misgivings. At last, one morning in June, he received at Port Royal, Jamaica, a newspaper addressed very shakily in Laura's hand. She was then alive! He tore the paper open. A marked paragraph met his eye. It ran as follows:

"We hear upon good authority that the intended

marriage of Captain Hemmings, commander of Her Majesty's ship *Adelaide*, and Miss Triscott, of Penallyn Hall, will be celebrated at Penallyn about the middle of July."

William Fox trembled as he read the words. Was he then to be balked of his vengeance after all? He went at once to the captain, and urgently applied to be allowed to claim his immediate discharge. The captain was kind but firm.

"It was impossible. He could not be spared."

That evening, while endeavouring to write to George Triscott, he was struck down by an attack of the deadly yellow fever.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WRECK.

WHEN Fox recovered consciousness, he found himself in a hospital. His ship had sailed, and he himself for a fortnight had remained in a very precarious state. Although the strength of his constitution had enabled him to shake off the fever, his mind, ever brooding over Laura's wrongs and his desire to avenge her, militated much against his regaining strength. In fact, so much was he debilitated that it was resolved to send him home on the first opportunity. This soon came, and, about three weeks after he had first been admitted into hospital, William Fox was embarked upon the steamship *Queen of the Seas*, as a passenger to Plymouth. There might yet be time for the unmasking of Laura's destroyer. Fox's wishes were also at last fulfilled. A board of surgeons had declared him unfit for further service. He was a free man at last!

While still lying on his bed of sickness at Port Royal, Fox had made his will. In this document he left all his lately-acquired property to Laura Luscombe. The will itself had been forwarded to Sir John Treleaven with a letter dictated by Fox asking that gentleman to become his executor. Had the surgeons, who had certified to William's unfitness for further service, seen him after he

had been two or three days at sea, they might have thought they had made a mistake. Never man recovered so quickly both spirits and health as did the ex-gunner. Although the good ship *Queen of the Seas* was as fast a boat as any afloat, yet she seemed but to creep along to him in his impatience. In spite of this, the knowledge that, in all probability, he was likely to arrive in time gave Fox renewed courage, which, of itself, gave him health and strength.

The *Queen of the Seas* touched at Queenstown after an uneventful voyage. Here William telegraphed to Laura that she might expect to see him at Saltash in about thirty-six hours' time, possibly sooner. It depended upon the time the steamer was delayed at Queenstown. In his telegram, which was a lengthy one, William inquired for her health, for he had been very anxious, both before and when he had received that newspaper from her, addressed in such a shaky hand, and accompanied by no letter. Poor William! he had feared many things. He also inquired when Miss Triscott's marriage was to take place. In an hour or two, William, who had employed the interval in writing to Sir John Treleaven a letter, which he intended posting in England, received an answer by electric wire. Laura said:

"She was happy that he was so near, that she had been very ill, that Miss Triscott's marriage was fixed to take place that day week."

William's impatience to reach England after the receipt of this telegram knew no bounds. He feared, but now quite expected, to find Laura a mother upon his arrival. This thought only made him grind his teeth with still greater rage and hatred for Hemmings. In his anxiety to know the worst, he was on the point of landing, proceeding by

rail to Dublin, and crossing by the mail-steamer to Holyhead. But the captain of the *Queen of the Seas* persuaded him that this would be a useless expense for a very small saving of time. So he remained where he was, and the ship very shortly left Queenstown. When they left the harbour the wind was high, blowing three-quarters of a gale and still rising. Oh, far better had it been for Fox had he landed at Queenstown!

When once more he viewed the dear old Land's End and the "first and last house," seen so often before, a hurricane was raging, and a fearful sea beating full on the Cornish coast.

A little beyond Penzance, near the village of Marazion, the *Queen of the Seas* was dashed to pieces on the rocks. In a farmhouse on the coast, named Manwinnion, Jack was staying, it being part of his own property. He helped to bring in a battered and almost unrecognisable corpse. By a letter taken from the dead man's pocket and addressed to himself, he knew it to be the mortal remains of poor William Fox. Wrecked on his own coast, and within a few miles of his own birthplace, he had been called in the midst of life to his account with Him who hath said: "Vengeance is mine!" For this is what had happened:

When William had seen that there was no help for the vessel—as, her rudder being gone, she was drifting gradually towards the coast—he had gone below and hastily added a few lines to his letter to Jack, saying he was near death, and again commending Laura to his care. He had hardly wrapped the letter in oilskin, placed it in his bosom, and gone once more on deck, when the ship struck heavily on the rocks. Commending his soul to God, William sprang

far over the side, clearing the edge of the rock, and commenced fiercely battling with the waves which were washing over the doomed vessel. At one time it seemed as if he would be saved. As he rose on the crest of a wave, he saw a little strip of sandy beach, and on it a small group of men. He recognised the tallest man there, who, bareheaded and with a rope round his waist, was advancing through the surf at the peril of his own life to help the poor fellow struggling with the roaring breakers.

Yes! William Fox in that instant recognised him, whom once he had considered as his bitterest enemy, whose life he had attempted. And, in the agonies of death, he was yet able to implore from his soul a blessing on Jack's head. Another second—he had been dashed with fury against a rock, and all was over. The next wave threw him, a bleeding and mangled corpse, into Jack's arms.

It was one of the most awful wrecks that had been known of for years on the Cornish coast. Not a soul escaped alive. Not one of the many bodies, save Fox's alone, cast ashore had been recognisable. The papers were full of the disaster and of the bravery shown by Sir John Treleaven in venturing into that deadly surf to save the lives of others. The strange fact of the man whose life he had so nearly saved having proved to be his own would-be murderer, as shown by the remarkable circumstance of his bearing on his person a letter addressed to the very man who drew his corpse ashore, was such a coincidence that it naturally could not pass without much comment in the newspapers.

Jack was once more a hero. The *Daily Telegraph* had a sensational article upon it, the *Standard* another, the *Globe* a third. As for the *Western Morning News*, the ship-

wreck with all its incidents, recovery of corpses, the inquest, the examination of Sir John Treleaven, etc. etc., provided that newspaper with sensational topics for weeks. At a dull season, when they were most wanted, it proved to be a perfect godsend.

Ada Triscott did not fail to hear her late lover's actions commented on favourably; for the Triscotts were back now in Tamar Terrace, and the awful wreck with its details was the talk of the day. They had all liked and respected poor Fox. His attack upon Jack had been set down ere this to its right cause—jealousy; for it had leaked out that he was an old lover of Laura's. Jealousy, Ada thought, was excuse enough for any bad action. When Hemmings heard of Fox's death, he looked quite pleased.

"Dead, is he? good job too! I never liked that man—too much of a sea-lawyer to please me;" and he added to himself: "I think it's just as well the fellow's out of the way—who knows what mischief he might have done, coming here now; especially if that girl had got hold of him? It's a providence!"

Who knew indeed? It was a providence. It was but another remarkable instance of the everyday occurrence of one man's skittles being knocked down, whilst another successfully balances his egg upon its end. In good sooth, it was a providence that, for its own good reasons, took away from this world an honest, if perhaps a vindictive man, just as he was about to confound and put to utter shame a knave who was now left to pursue, as he liked, the bent of his own inclinations: for, with the death of William Fox, all that was likely to mar Hemmings' future happiness was removed.

After the expiration of another week, he would be free

to taste it fully in the arms of Ada, unmolested by qualms of conscience, for he had none—or by fear of discovery. Once he was married to her, he did not much care who found out the truth about him. Since Jack Treleaven had never troubled either him or his future uncle-in-law's family from the day of the meeting in the summer-house, Captain Hemmings felt that now, after so many months, he need have nothing to fear from him. Nor had Laura molested him in any way, or sought a *rapprochement*, or come to him with tears and sobs and perhaps threats; all of which would have been excessively annoying to a man about to be married to a lovely and most desirable girl.

Neither had Miss Watson ever attempted to interfere in any manner again, although she and Ada had unavoidably met several times. The whole scandal attached to Jack seemed also to have died out of remembrance, since his accession to the baronetcy. Laura Luscombe might just as well never have been born for any trouble she seemed now likely to occasion. Her very existence appeared to be forgotten. There had been a time when Richard Hemmings had had the most serious misgivings as to what course of action she might pursue. It was not a pleasant thing to hear, as he had heard, that the girl, whom he had ruined and left, was in the company of the man whom he had injured. What plan might they not concoct between them for his overthrow? His pride, too, had been hurt by the disdainful way in which she had treated his letter of *kind* (?) dismissal—never even answering it; never attempting, in a last show of the love that he too surely knew had been his, to induce him to recall that odious epistle, that horrible offer of money, which she had scorned either to accept or to take the trouble to refuse.

Like all men who have acted with meanness, he felt keenly the fact that she to whom he had so acted had plainly shown him that she despised him. And yet he had felt, or rather feared sometimes, that it might all be part of a game she was playing. This silence on her part might be but the prelude to some deep-laid scheme of revenge. Knowing Fox's vindictive spirit and intentions of punishing Laura's destroyer, he had been most anxious to prevent a coalition between these two. He had already seen how capable Fox was of carrying out his vengeance by the attack upon Treleaven, and she might egg him on again.

"Of course the man had found out his mistake, and would probably next try to wreak his vengeance upon him. Laura *alone* he did not fear, he could easily confute anything she might say. But might she not be 'lying by' for some great *coup* at the instigation of Fox, whose head was long and sensible? The fellow had been abroad—what brought him back so soon? Confound him! Thank God, he's dead!" was the impious termination of Captain Hemmings' reverie upon the subject.

CHAPTER XXX.

MOLLIE'S WEDDING

WE must now go back a little, and take up events which had occurred previous to the wreck of the *Queen of the Seas*. Not the least important of these had been Mollie's marriage to our old friend "Bung," *alias* the "sign-painter," *alias* Captain Lifton. Indeed, it is much to be feared that Mollie, in entering upon the marriage state, has also taken upon herself the various cognomens of her husband, as popular as ever in his regiment with youngsters and oldsters alike. Alas! that such should be the case, but it is nevertheless true that Mollie is now as well known by the title of Mrs. "Bung" as by her more legitimate one.

When she first became aware of the fact through the officiousness of a friend, who probably thought that Mollie might be annoyed by the information, Mollie had put a stopper upon her opponent by saying, calmly:

"Oh, indeed, do they? Well, a name by which my husband has been known and liked for so many years is not one that *I* should be ashamed of. I am glad to hear it."

Mollie's wedding had been a jolly one, as might have been expected. There were no bridesmaids; but there was a breakfast—Nellie had seen to that. It was given at the "Royal Hotel" in Plymouth, where also in the parish church the ceremony had been performed.

Everybody came to see this extremely popular couple "told off," and as nearly everybody as possible was invited to the breakfast. Mollie looked lovely in her bridal attire. "Bung" was, as became him, a little nervous, although he had been screwed-up previously, almost to the point, by Jack's sage advice as to how he was to conduct himself during the ordeal. He had also been fortified with one farewell bachelor glass of beer; having eschewed all "goes" of whisky since Christmas Day.

The arrangements for the breakfast—which had, under Nellie's and Jack's supervision, been as nearly perfect as possible—were, "Bung" was known to say in after life, incomplete only in one respect, viz., "that, although champagne was in plenty, there was no beer to be had."

At the breakfast Nellie had Jack to sit next to her, and look after her, as in the old days of ball-suppers; consequently there were not those wanting who were ready to augur from this fact, that "there would be another wedding soon." These were of that too common class of persons who cannot see two people of the opposite sex enjoying each other's society without at once imagining them engaged, and who are indeed too often guilty of a downright falsehood while asserting: "I assure you, my dear, it's a positive fact!"

Needless to say that Nellie cared as little now as ever for popular opinion. "Such gossip," she was wont to say, "amused other people, and did not hurt her." She was pleased on this occasion to have Jack with her, and to let people see that they were still as ever firm friends.

But was she happy? She joked and laughed, and was even a little more slangy than of old—for, though she had lately dropped most of her queer expressions, some kind of

spirit, perhaps that of bravado, caused her to suffer from a relapse this morning, and she said more queer things than usual, although she knew well that Jack did not like it. Her appetite seemed for once to have deserted her. When Jack, surprised, pressed her to eat something, she replied snappishly that she had made a good "square meal," and told him not to bother her.

This was manifestly untrue, but Jack took the hint, and let her alone. She was inwardly more grateful to him for this than she would formerly have been for all his attentions to the wants of her "inner man." Yes, Nellie was unhappy at the idea of losing Mollie; but, with the exception of Jack Treleaven, no one, not even Mollie herself, could have guessed it from her demeanour, either now or at any time subsequent to the wedding.

But Nellie had another cause for unhappiness; Mollie's immediate departure impressed vividly upon her mind the fact that the man sitting by her side—friend, lover, whatever he might be to her—he, too, would probably soon be gone, for already there had been some premonitory rumours of the possible departure of the —th for the summer manœuvres at Aldershot. How she loved him! What desolation her life would be without either Mollie or Jack! She felt confident that Jack still loved Ada, who, spite of Hemmings' monition, was present upon this occasion.

Her uncle having been invited, William Triscott did not think fit to refuse to attend the marriage of the daughter of his old friend, Mr. Watson.

Captain Hemmings had not been invited to the wedding-breakfast, and although he was of course included in the invitation sent to the captain and officers of H.M.S. *Adelaide* for the afternoon dance that was to follow the breakfast, the

commander had sufficient good taste not to appear at the "Royal Hotel" that afternoon.

Nellie, who observed everything, had once or twice noticed Jack's eyes wandering in the direction of where Ada was sitting, not far off, on the opposite side of the table. Nellie watched Ada closely where she sat, looking, with her clear and brilliant colouring, as beautiful and good as Mollie, although in a different style, for Mollie was fair, and Ada Triscott was a brunette, with deep, soft, dark eyes, and clearly defined black eyebrows.

Nellie had no ill-feeling towards Ada. On the contrary, she pitied her for being the victim of Hemmings. With a man clever and subtle enough to turn his own misdeeds to such advantage, what might not the poor girl be brought to suffer in her after-life? But "honour where honour is due," and Nellie could not help feeling a kind of disgusted admiration for the consummate tact and boldness with which Hemmings had turned everything to his own advantage.

As she watched, she saw Ada take a little furtive glance at Jack from underneath her long, dark lashes. There was no mistaking the meaning of that glance from the soft brown eyes.

"Why," said Nellie to herself, "it's just as I thought, Ada is as much in love with Jack as ever. The girl's a fool. Why does she not get rid of that brute of a man before it's too late? I'm sure I should never wish to stand in the way of her—no! of dear old Jack's happiness. Ada does not deserve to be happy, for she would not take my pretty plain hints last December. Still she is a lovable girl, far too good for that beast."

Presently Nellie, who, although apparently carrying on

a lively conversation with her next neighbour, was still watching, surprised another glance. This time she saw Ada redden painfully, until her face resembled a ripe peach in its rosy bloom, and then look hard at her plate. The cause was evident, for, on looking at Sir John Treleaven, that gentleman had also a heightened colour, and apparently also a heightened interest in the crockery before him. Their eyes had evidently met!

Nellie abruptly left her neighbour to continue the conversation alone, while she seemed, from the set expression of her face, to be coming to some determination. It was not long in being brought to a conclusion.

"I will," she thought. "There's a good six weeks; I'll do all in my power for Jack yet, honestly and truly. And I'll begin at once. Even supposing all my efforts are in vain, why, then I'll honestly and truly try to do something else"—and a smile came over her face—"that is, try to marry Jack myself."

Turning to Jack, she asked him a question that rather startled him.

"Jack, do you know anything about Laura Luscombe? I know you do, though. What's her address?"

"Why do you want to know, Nellie? I thought you didn't like her."

"Oh, that was formerly, when I thought you were making a fool of her, poor girl—I know now I was mistaken; and I have my own reasons."

"Well, Nellie, I'll give you her address. I've seen her once or twice lately. I fear you'll find her sadly in want of a woman's help."

And Jack sighed in pity for the poor deserted girl. Nellie loved him more than ever for that sigh.

"Very well, Jack," she said; "send it to me to-morrow."

The dancing had begun, but Nellie did not go in at all for her old rôle of being *blasée* or *passée*. She did not look the latter, at any rate, and, if she felt the former, she did not show it.

"Bung" had the extreme felicity of once more dancing on the same boards with the girl he loved, and once more to the romantic "Sirènes" waltz. Yes, the girl he loved, and the girl who was now his wife.

"Dear old fellow! How happy he looks!" thought Jack. "I'll go and spoil his pleasure by taking away his wife for a short time."

Going up to him, Jack said:

"Now, Mollie, you're not going to dance any more with my *chum*. In after life, I give you full and free permission to dance as much as you like with him; but as I'm in the secret, and you can't get away quietly without me, you'll just have to drop that humbugging fellow, and we'll have one of our old dances together, and make him jealous, won't we, Mollie? Now, 'Bung,' obey orders, you ruffian! Go and dance with somebody else until I come and tell you I've squared matters, and it's time to go."

And so "Bung" obeyed orders, like a dutiful captain as he was, and left his wife and Jack to have one of the best dances they ever had together. For they loved each other, these two, after a fashion; both loved "Bung"; both loved Nellie; and, therefore, on the system of Euclid's maxims or postulates—which is it?—they loved one another.

The dance was finished. Mollie had taken her very last fling as a maiden. As a matron in future days she and Jack might perchance once more step it together.

"Now, Mollie, go and get your things on; I'll tell the old man and arrange matters—send the governor to you, and everything. I'll come directly and give you a kiss myself too, just to make the dear old fellow more thoroughly jealous, as indeed I am myself of you, for you've spoilt all my quiet evenings, and smokes, and yarns, and all that kind of thing, for the rest of my existence. It will be very slow without 'Bung.'"

And off went Jack.

These good people had arranged a plan amongst themselves to enable the married couple to get away quietly to the station; not such an easy thing in a place like Plymouth. But Jack had contrived to spare old "Bung" his nervous blushes, and any odd boots and shoes on leaving the "Royal Hotel" for the station, which, as every one knows, is only a few hundred yards away.

There are two doors to the "Royal Hotel," one leading into Lockyer Street, and the other into the continuation of George Street, leading straight to the Great Western station. Jack ordered round the carriage with its pair of grays to that door which leads into Lockyer Street. Of course, here it was that the crowd—not altogether an ordinary crowd, but one mainly composed of well-dressed persons—had collected.

After the carriage had been waiting for some fifteen minutes, a waiter with a large rosette came out and informed the coachman, in an audible voice, that the carriage would not be required for an hour, as the bride and bridegroom were going by a later train.

In the meantime, while those armed with old leather missiles remained waiting and savagely nursing those remnants of the cobbler's art, fully determined to shy with

greater force when the time came, the bride and bridegroom had quietly disappeared; having walked out of the George Street door, they had left by the train without, as the papers would say, "the slightest demonstration." Of course, everybody was savage at having been sold. The crowd was not kept waiting beyond the stipulated hour, when it was gently conveyed to them by the decorated waiter that the bride and bridegroom had "given 'em all the slip."

This business successfully accomplished, Jack came to claim his dance with Nellie. He found her conversing with Ada Triscott; but, as the latter's partner arrived at the same moment, there was no disagreeable *rencontre*.

Nellie had now dropped her slang—she was serious, at any rate, with Jack.

"Jack," she said, in a pause of the waltz, "you love Ada still, don't you?" Poor Jack coloured up to the roots of his hair. He looked pained and unhappy. "Forgive me, Jack," said Nellie; "I see you do. Well, I think you are right. What have you done since your fruitless journey to Tristillian to right yourself in her eyes—anything?"

"Nothing," answered he, "nothing. What could I do? She despised me—she was engaged to another man. She hated me. How could I lower myself by making any further appeal to her of any sort?"

"Jack," said Nellie, softly, "you're a very good fellow, but you're a little too proud. Do you love her? Why don't you answer me that question?"

"Well, then, I do," he said, rather sullenly.

"Let's stop a moment," said Nellie, "I'm rather tired."

Jack complied. He had hardly stopped when he was aware of the fact that he was standing next Ada Triscott,

She was, for some reason or other, alone. What a flood of recollections rushed through his mind in one moment! Little cared he now whether she was engaged, or married, for that matter—he only longed to speak to her. He had not long to wait. Nellie's plan, if it was one, was soon displayed openly.

"Ada," said she. Ada turned, the bloom of youth upon her perfect face resembling more than ever the luscious downy colouring of the peach. "Ada, I think you know Sir John Treleaven, don't you? If not, I'll leave you to make his acquaintance;" and, slipping her arm out of his, she was gone.

Jack was in a state of excitement that can be imagined only by putting oneself in his place. He had not spoken to her for eight months, and now he was left alone with her.

He held out his hand.

"Ada," he said. She took it, and the touch sent the hot blood to both their faces. "Come, dance with me, Ada!"

She could not answer—she could hardly breathe; but the love that shone in her eyes was enough for Jack. In another moment they were floating through the room, his arm around her, her breath fanning his cheek. He clasped her tighter as the dance went on, but still Ada said never a word. She felt inclined to break into a passion of wild tears and reproaches. Oh, the agony—the happiness of that moment! Oh! how it all seemed to come back—that dance on board the *Adelaide*, the dark corner on the poop! Subsequently the long daily meetings, day after day, week after week. Had it all been a dream? Was this too but a dream, a dream of the lost passion?

Ada was but mortal. She forgot Captain Hemmings, she forgot her duty to him, she forgot her own self-respect —everything; except that she was once more enclasped by him she loved. She had forgotten his misdoings for the moment, as if they had never existed. She knew nothing, felt nothing, but that her heart was beating against the heart of him she loved. Her first love—her only love! One minute ago, and she had never expected to hear the dear familiar voice addressing her again. And now—and now, Jack's arm encircled her; Jack was calling her by every loving and endearing name—imploring her to whisper back but one word if she loved him still. Ah! Ada was but mortal; had she been superhuman, she might have left him, she might have said she did not love him—hated, abominated him!

Naughty, weak, wicked Ada! She said none of these things. Her eyes grew to his face in despairing, appealing love.

"Oh, Jack, you *know*—you know."

For one blissful moment life had nothing for them but each other. It had passed! A dreary sea of recollection had flowed back over both. The melancholy strains of "Geliebt und verloren" were still ringing down the room. But Ada and Jack had stopped dancing, and were standing together, pale and agitated, in a window.

She was the first to speak, her voice trembling and her breath coming in short sobs.

"Yes, Jack, I love you still. Love you as I always have loved you. My love for you is killing me. Oh! I ought to be ashamed to confess it. Jack, Jack, how could you have treated me so? I have longed for you—prayed for you—tried to drive you from my head and from my

heart. But it was no use; I could not forget you. God forgive me—God forgive us both. I am engaged to be married——"

She stopped; this thought seemed to freeze the words upon her lips.

"Why should you marry him, Ada?" said Jack, fiercely.

She was slowly regaining her composure.

"I will tell you why I must marry him, Jack—my honour is at stake; I have promised him; he loves me."

"Curse him!" said Jack; "he is a villain. I beg your pardon, Ada. I mean, do you prefer him to me?"

"Hush, Jack," she said, solemnly. "I love you, and I have forgiven you. Let that be enough."

There was a little pause, and then she spoke again:

"When you outraged every feeling I possessed, when life lay black and weary before me, I accepted Captain Hemmings. And I know, Jack, for I have had the proof of my own eyes, that there is a poor girl, who, if she is not your wife, ought to be so. Do not tempt me again. Do not wreck her life as well as mine."

"Ada, it is false," said Jack; "you are mistaken; I never did what you think. I swear it."

A bright light of hope leaped into her eyes.

"Prove it, Jack, my darling, my only love. Oh, can you not prove it, only so that I can satisfy my uncle and George? If you can only show me the slightest proof of your innocence, I will never marry Richard Hemmings, I swear; but whether or no, I now loathe the idea of ever being any man's wife but yours, my own Jack."

"I cannot prove it," said Jack, in a hoarse, unnatural voice. "I *will* not implicate another to save myself. I cannot be so low as that."

"Ada, Ada, where are you? it is time to go," cried the voice of William Triscott, close behind them. "Come along, child! Ah! how do, Treleaven?" with a cool nod; and, giving her his arm, they went quickly away together.

CHAPTER XXXI.

NELLIE AN ANGEL OF MERCY.

IT was very unfortunate that Mr. Triscott should have arrived to bear off his niece just when he did; but it must be owned that he was fully justified in not leaving Ada longer in the company of Sir John Treleaven. He had formerly liked Jack greatly, and because he had been spoken of as a bit of a scamp would have been no reason to William Triscott for personally discontinuing his intimacy with the young fellow. But that he should be in the society of his niece was quite a different thing; this he could not consider advisable. He was astonished now at the *rapprochement* that must have taken place between the couple, since they were dancing together, for Jack's name had been "tabooed" on Ada's lips for months past.

"How was it, my child," he asked, as they drove home, "that you and Jack Treleaven were dancing together just now?"

"Nellie Watson left us together," she replied, truthfully.

"That Nellie Watson is a cracked kind of girl. I don't think I should do it any more, if I was you; Hemmings might not like it, you know, dear."

Ada, gazing out of the carriage window, hardly seemed to hear, and Mr. Triscott said no more. But she *had*

heard; and he had said enough to show Ada that unless in some miraculous way it could be proved, to everybody's satisfaction, that Jack had not been guilty, and that every one had been deceived, Jack could never more be friend or lover of hers.

In her cooler moments now she thought with shame and reproach of the words she had spoken. How could she have told Jack that she still loved him? In six weeks she was to be married—she had acted traitorously to Captain Hemmings. There was one consolation: she had never pretended to be in love with this last-named gentleman. Esteem, respect, friendship were all she had ever pretended to feel towards him. In her heart she believed Jack's protestations of innocence, but why would he not, or could he not, clear himself? Surely if he really loved her he would not let anything stand in his way, so that he might be once more spotless in her sight. Oh! it was all dreadful and miserable. Only one thing was certain: that in six weeks' time she would be united to a man she did not love. And why? Because he was her brother's friend. What a reason! Better far to have remained unmarried.

The meeting with Jack had unsettled her altogether. Before this episode, Ada had become partly reconciled to the idea of her future lot; she might not be happy, but in time she would become at least indifferent. Now the idea of her approaching marriage was almost insupportable. Why had she met Jack again? Why, if he was pure and free from blame, could he not prove it? She wearied her brain with thinking.

But at present we must leave our heroine to her unenviable thoughts. And let us hope that Captain

Hemmings did not see through the extra warmth of manner she put on about this period when he came; partly to hide her real feelings, partly in expiation of the offence of which she had been guilty, in telling the truth of her pure heart to the man she still loved so fondly and so madly.

Poor Jack got no rest the night of Mollie's wedding. The meeting with Ada had had the effect of unsettling him as well as her. Perhaps, had not Mr. Triscott interfered to bear her away, he might have told her, as Nellie Watson had long advised him to do, the whole truth: that it was not himself but Captain Hemmings who had acted shamefully. He might have got over the exaggerated feelings of honour, which had hitherto prevented him making the disclosure, since he had heard from Ada's own lips that Captain Hemmings was her affianced husband. If she had doubted his word, he might have referred her to Laura Luscombe herself. But none of these things had he done. He left her, he felt, as great a criminal in her eyes as ever. This girl, whose pure young love would have been a safeguard to keep him unspotted from the world, was, alas! lost to him for ever.

How much happier was Jack a few months ago when only a needy subaltern, than now while the possessor of a title and thousands a year! As he lay restlessly tossing on his bed, he felt that he would willingly give up every penny, if only so doing would ensure one walk upon the Hoe with Ada, on the old familiar footing.

And Nellie Watson! Did she sleep that night? No, we fear not much. She had observed the result of her generous conduct, in willingly leaving the man she loved with her rival. She had seen their heightened colour, had watched their flashing eyes as they danced together. Had

she done what was likely to render Jack happy? This was the only question she asked herself. At any rate, she had done her best. To-morrow, or the next day, she would have other business on hand.

A day or two afterwards, poor Laura was astonished in her solitude at Saltash by the arrival of a visitor. The landlady had announced, in a marked manner, that there "was a lady below, mem, who wishes to see you." Laura was, of course, living under an assumed name; and the landlady, naturally a good soul, was well enough paid, thanks to Jack's generosity, not to give herself airs, or otherwise take advantage of the poor girl's friendless condition.

But the fact of her lodger having a visitor, and that visitor a lady, was such a strange occurrence that she was justified in showing a certain air of importance in making the above announcement, for hitherto, since the defection of her supposed husband, Captain Hemmings, the only visitor to Laura had been Sir John Treleaven. His visits had been very rare at the house, as, for her sake, was highly desirable.

It was, indeed, a lonely, miserable existence that Laura had dragged out through all these dreadful weary months. Not a soul to speak to save her landlady; ill, harassed with the thoughts of a worse trouble coming—deserted—there had been no friendly woman's voice to help to cheer her under her misfortunes. And now, who could this lady be? And what could she want with her? No wonder that Laura turned pale with agitation as she asked her landlady "if she was sure the lady wanted to see *her*?"

"Yes, mem, quite sure, the young lady asked for you by name if you didn't live here, and if you was at home?

I said yes, you did live here, and you was at home. She's waiting downstairs, mem ; hadn't I better show her up ? "

" Yes, I suppose so," said Laura, sinking down into a chair. " Show her up."

The lady was shown up. As Nellie Watson—for, of course, it was she—entered the room, Laura rose to receive her. She was about to address her by name, but her astonishment was too great to do so instantly.

Meantime Nellie, noticing the landlady standing holding the door half open, and with eyes and ears wholly open, turned sharply, and said:

"I think you had better shut that door; Mrs. Taylor may feel the draught," and she closed it herself.

Reopening it a moment later, Nellie found, as she had expected, the landlady still outside, waiting to listen to what might transpire.

"Oh, Mrs. Jones," said Nellie, " I thought I might as well tell you at once that you need not wait here to show me down, as I may be here for some little time."

Exit Mrs. Jones, discomfited.

" Miss Watson," said Laura, who had had time to recover herself somewhat, and speaking with dignity, although her lips were trembling, and she was obliged to lean on a chair for support—" Miss Watson, to what do I owe the honour of this visit? Why have you come thus to spy out a wretched girl in her shame, when she is only anxious to hide herself from the world? I know that you have always disliked me ; but what have I ever done to you that you should think it necessary to come and see with your own eyes the proofs of my guilt and shame? Are you satisfied now that I am as bad and despicable as you always took care to let me know you thought me? If so, go ! I have

no friends, nothing you can do or say can harm me with any one, or make me one whit more miserable than I am at this moment. Go! you may be polluted if you stay in this room with me any longer."

The quivering of those pale lips went straight to Nellie's heart.

"My poor child, I am so sorry for you. Here, pray take my hand. I have come to ask your pardon for all my old slighting ways towards you. I know you have every right to hate me. I have behaved cruelly and unkindly to you, but now, Laura, my poor child, I do *not* come as a spy. Believe me, I have only come because I knew how deserted and lonely you are, and how much you must be in want of a woman's help. Will you forgive me and let me help you? I will try to make you forget I ever slighted you in the past. Come, do let us be friends, dear Laura."

To an arid plain the welcome rain does not bring more relief, than did these kind words to one who was so much in want of human sympathy. Nellie had touched the right chord in Laura's somewhat defiant nature. Had she, with the patronising air of a superior, come to offer her assistance, her advances would have been indignantly repelled. But she came as a suppliant for forgiveness as from an equal, hiding under that guise her proffered aid. What woman who had lived alone and unfriended for months but would have been moved in her distress by words of kindness such as these? Poor Laura's heart was touched.

"Forgive you, Miss Watson! I forgive you? Ah, you are a good woman to visit a wretched girl like me!" she cried, wildly. "Forgive me for what I said just now."

Nellie put her arm round the poor girl, and, pressing that throbbing heart against her own, she said:

"There, we are friends now, as we ought to have been, were it not for my fault, long ago. Believe me, dear Laura, I will not desert you now; you must treat me and trust me like a sister. Is it a bargain?"

But Laura was too much choked by her emotion to reply. She had been mistaken; Nellie was a good woman in the truest sense of the word. She was doing a noble action in having sufficient strength of mind to help an erring sister in distress, careless of what people might say or think of her for associating with one who had fallen from "virtue's fair estate," who had loved "not wisely, but too well."

After a pause, Nellie asked:

"Laura, does your mother know where you are? She ought to be here now."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Laura, "anything but that. I could not bear my poor mother's look if she saw me now."

"Very well," said Nellie, "we will let that be for the present, but not always. In the meantime, I must be a mother as well as a sister to you, I see. I can assure you," she added, cheerfully, "I am old enough to fill that post. I shall take care of you, and look after you closely enough, I promise you"; and, *sotto voce*, "would that I had done so a little in the past."

It is true Nellie had had plenty of opportunities in the past of improving the mind of this girl, whom she had known all her life. If, instead of having scorned her for what she called "her stuck-up ways," she had lent her a little friendly assistance and countenance, if she had tried to understand a little that sensitive nature, instead of putting it down as a thing to be stamped out, poor Laura might never have made such a signal failure of her career.

It may be remembered that it was partly to spite Nellie, by showing her how little effect her airs of superiority had on the "simple miller's daughter," that the latter had allowed herself to be paid attention to by any of those gentlemen whom she knew to be the friends of Miss Watson. Hence, indirectly, Nellie had not only not done what she might have done to keep this poor girl in the right road, but had been, in fact, one of the means that had led to her fall.

But we are not all perfect, nor was Nellie Watson more so than the rest of us. She was, however, now trying to make full amends for having let slip past opportunities of doing good, and a true friend she proved herself to Laura Luscombe in her day of trouble. Always pretty nearly her own mistress, Miss Watson was, fortunately for Laura, more so at this period than ever, as, immediately after Mollie's wedding, her father had gone away for a few weeks. While, therefore, Moor Lodge was given over to painters and plasterers, under the supervision of the stalwart Emma (who was having fine times of it with Jack Spriggs), her young mistress came in, nominally to stay with an old aunt in Plymouth. We say *nominally* advisedly, for staying away from the old aunt would have been nearer the truth. The old woman was afraid of her niece, by whom she was ruled with a rod of iron, without daring to open her lips.

Nellie therefore did as she liked, and passed most of her time looking after Laura, to whom the terrible crisis arrived a very few days after the interview we have just been describing. Laura, poor young thing! hovered for several days on that dread borderland between life and death. She was mercifully spared the misery of being long burdened with a child whose father cared not whether she

herself lived or died. Her infant survived its birth but a week; but even then its loss was a terrible blow to her, in whom had just been awakened the invincible feeling of maternal love, but to be so soon shattered.

Nellie was an angel of kindness during these sad days. She had entirely won poor Laura's love and confidence, and her heart burned with the more loathing and detestation of Captain Hemmings, as she fully realised the cruelty of the position in which he had left the girl whom he had ruined.

One morning, when Laura awoke from an uneasy sleep, she found her mother sitting by her bedside in the chair usually occupied by Nellie, who, of course, had brought her, but not without some slight previous warning to the sufferer. Nellie had shown great tact in the matter. She had chosen a time when, as the state of Laura's health was such that the issue was uncertain, no hard words could possibly be addressed to her by her parent.

We need not dwell upon the touching meeting between mother and daughter, but, as may be supposed under such circumstances, the reconciliation was complete. Laura knew now that if she died it would not be unforgiven by her who brought her into the world. This thought alone took such a load from her mind that it was mainly the cause of her regaining sufficient strength to shake off the clammy hand death had laid upon her.

CHAPTER XXXII.

NELLIE HAS A CHANCE.

SHORTLY after the events detailed in the last chapter, Nellie Watson had an interview with Jack Treleaven. On this occasion she told him plainly that she thought it would be a shame if so nice a girl as Ada should be sacrificed by being united to a man so utterly unscrupulous as Hemmings.

"Upon my word, Jack," she said, "something should be done to prevent it—I know you love Ada still, then why do not *you* step in? I would never let that man have her, if I was you. He managed to saddle you with his own misdoings in the meanest manner possible, and now he is going to marry, in a week or two, the girl who should have been your wife—in my opinion, at least."

"Yes, Nellie, that's all perfectly true; but what would you have me do? Do you not see that I am handicapped by her being engaged to this fellow? Because he has acted meanly to me is no reason that I in turn should act meanly to him. You cannot expect me to go and inform about his peccadilloes, now that Ada, for some inexplicable reason, is on the point of marrying him. Besides, even if I did turn informer, it does not follow that I should be believed."

Nellie remembered how signally she herself had failed to separate Hemmings and Ada, and was silent.

After a pause, she said:

"Jack, if poor Laura Luscombe herself went to the Triscotts and cleared you, if she herself told Ada that the man who was about to marry her had treated her shamefully, while letting them think it was you—there would be an end of it all. I know she would do it if she thought you would be benefited by such an action on her part."

"Possibly," said Jack; "but I would never be party to such an action, nor would I take advantage of it in any way. I trust that I have too much pride. And I should be sorry to hear that Laura had done such a thing. It would look too much as if she were prompted by a revengeful spirit which she has never shown. She has undergone great sufferings, mentally and physically, and you, Nellie, have acted like an angel to her. You would never, I am sure, wish her to have more pain by mixing herself up in any way with the affairs of this man, whose name she probably never wishes to hear again. You must remember that we are not the arbiters of her fate, any more than we are of Ada Triscott's; therefore, let us not by our actions in any way try to control either of them. What they now are in their separate spheres, they both are by the action of their own free will. Laura it may be in our power to befriend in the future, as, fortunately, it has been in the past. If Ada, of *her own free will*, likes to give up Captain Hemmings, well and good. But I will in no way attempt to lead that will, by prompting poor Laura to show up Hemmings to her. Nor, I am sure, would you. I suppose Hemmings really loves and respects Ada? Not that, except for her sake, I care whether he does or not. But, if he does, it is natural to suppose he is sorry for his

past, and will be a better conducted fellow in the future. As for what he has done concerning myself, I cannot say I forgive him in the least; but I consider it beneath my dignity to take any notice of it in any way now. So there you are, Nellie, don't you see?"

"Well, Jack," she said, "I see you're a pig-headed man, who does not know what's for his own good; but still, I must confess, there's sense in your arguments; and there's what I like more, there's gentlemanly feeling displayed in them. I believe you've been a bit of a scamp yourself in the past, if the truth were known; but I'm quite certain of one thing, you always were a gentleman. Upon the whole, I don't think you'll ever be a disgrace to your position."

"You make me blush," said Jack.

"That's not the point at all; the point is that you deliberately resign Ada Triscott to her fate, and consequently yourself, too, to yours. Well, I'm sorry, but you may be right. She'll be married in a fortnight or so. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes," he replied, "there's nothing in the world to prevent it, unless she chooses at the last moment to give him up—a most improbable proceeding."

These two were ignorant, which the reader is not, that at this very time William Fox was approaching his native shores, armed with his revenge, and fully determined to prevent the marriage in question. But the reader knows also how death, by cutting him off from the scene a few days later, did in fact, as Jack has just said, leave nothing in the world to prevent the match from taking place.

"Well, Jack," said Nellie, "let's talk about something else now. What time is the 'Queen's birthday parade' to

take place in the People's Park to-morrow? Where will be the best place for me to take the aunt to for the 'march past'? I'm too *blasée* to care for it myself, you know. And at what time are we to turn up for your luncheon at the barracks? I feel quite cheerful at the idea of that part of the performance, I assure you."

It was quite true, Nellie did somehow feel cheerful; but it was not at the prospect of the bountiful lunch to which the officers of the —th had invited all their friends. No, it must be confessed that Jack's recently expressed determination to in no way clear himself with Ada, had, although it should not of course have done so, caused Nellie to feel happy in spite of herself. Although telling herself it was wrong, she could not help saying inwardly, in her own naïve way:

"Oh, well, then, perhaps there's a chance for me, after all!"

She had done all she could to ensure the happiness of others. Why then did she not deserve to be happy herself? No woman had ever denied herself more generously in her rival's interest than she had done. If her efforts had been unavailing, if in spite of all her promptings, her self-abnegations, Jack refused to take the opportunity she offered him of again being Ada's lover and soon her husband, why, then she, Nellie, had a right to rest upon her oars, with a certain amount of satisfaction for good deeds done in the past, and with a certain amount of hope for the future.

The love of Nellie for Jack was not of the ordinary passionate kind, that perhaps bursts into life like a fifth of November bonfire, only to die as quickly as it flames. She felt a great deal of the kind of affection a sister might have for a favourite brother, as well as the ordinary downright

love of lovers. It was this sisterly affection that had enabled her to conquer her other passion, and to act the unselfish part of one of those loving sisters, who is willing to sacrifice herself in her, perhaps unworthy, brother's interests, and who does it.

Nellie had often said, when chaffed about Jack in the old days long ago, "Oh, yes, I love him like a mother." This, too, although said in jest, was true. She had liked to watch over him like a mother; she had got to love him like a sister—from loving him like a sister, to loving him like a lover. This last love had swallowed up the two former; and now she loved him with the strength of all three combined.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE "QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY PARADE."

TO those who have not the opportunity of witnessing a real battle, and yet for whom the smoke and noise of gunpowder is an attraction, a Queen's birthday parade offers a great amount of pleasure, especially when the festival is celebrated by a large garrison.

The Queen's birthday at Devonport was, in the year of our story, a treat looked forward to for some time beforehand by all the powder-loving inhabitants of the "three towns." Among these, of course, the ladies predominated, and by them was many a hard fight fought for the coveted tickets giving admission to the ramparts directly in rear of the saluting base. A privileged few were admitted into the private enclosure reserved for the admirals and other high officials, who, although present in their grandest of uniforms, did not take any active part in the proceedings. This enclosure was next to the saluting flag, and was the best place of all from whence to witness the "march past."

George Triscott being flag-lieutenant to the naval commander-in-chief, it is not to be wondered at that Ada and her cousin Rose, then on a visit at Tamar Terrace, graced this enclosure with their pretty faces and frocks.

The parade was a grand one, consisting of both soldiers and sailors; for the blue-jackets, men and boys, were for the nonce given rifles, and were prepared to fire their *feu-de-joie*, and to show that they knew their infantry drill as well as any of the "grabbies," as they are pleased to term the soldiers. The ship's boys from the *Adelaide*, *Implacable*, and *Indus*, formed a company by themselves, and right well the little fellows looked. All the blue-jackets together made up a splendid battalion. To many people the blue-jackets, with their tarpaulin hats, and loose, easy, white-collared dress, formed the principal feature in the day's proceedings.

The companies were commanded by naval officers, who showed themselves quite efficient as captains and subalterns; while the whole battalion was commanded by Captain Hemmings, who, upon this occasion, looked every inch a soldier, that is, as much a soldier as a man with large gold epaulettes and a cocked hat can look. In one thing Captain Hemmings was wise: he did not, while in the proud position of commander of a battalion of infantry, ride a horse. No doubt he would have liked to have done so, for all the other soldiers did; but then people are apt to make ill-natured remarks about riding up the rigging when they see a naval officer in full dress on horseback. He therefore contented himself with commanding his battalion on foot.

Some of our readers may doubt the fact of blue-jackets and naval officers generally being such proficients at infantry drill. If so, let the unbelievers take a voyage to India on board one of Her Majesty's troopships; they may then see the sailors drilling all day long. We ourselves remember, upon such an occasion, a naval officer who had

one pet evolution, which he used to perform on all days and in all weathers: this was to "fix swords" and "prepare for cavalry." Then, much to the delight of Tommy Atkins, might the gallant blue-jackets have been seen down on the knee, firmly grasping their rifles with an expression of face which seemed to say:

"No matter how this 'ere ship rolls, nor how it pitches, nor however much the wind blows, no cavalry shall come aboard of this 'ere craft—no! none whatever."

But we are digressing, for pleasant recollections have carried us away, far out to sea, whereas we now have to do with soldiers and sailors on dry land.

A little before twelve o'clock, on the 24th of May, the troops, naval and military, were drawn up in line in the following order: The sailors, being the senior arm, were on the right, then came a battery of artillery, and then the infantry. This consisted of four battalions, *i.e.*, three line regiments and a strong battalion of marines. The line extended almost from end to end of the People's Park. Owing to the configuration of the ground, the line of troops was disposed in a curve, which was looked upon as rather an advantage than otherwise by the non-military spectator.

At one minute to twelve, the general and all his staff being in their places in front of the centre of the line, all began to strike their knees tight into their horses' sides. In this manœuvre they were strictly obeyed by all colonels, majors, and other mounted officers, although no word of command had been given. It was not necessary.

At twelve o'clock—yes, at twelve o'clock precisely—the fun began. "Royal salute! Present arms!" The cannon booming, the whole line presenting arms, all the officers

saluting with their swords, the colours of the different regiments slowly lowered to majesty, the sun flashing from bayonets and swords during the motions of the "present." All these—simple as they may seem to the soldier, who "slaps his gun" daily—combined, so Ada thought, to make the prettiest military picture she had ever seen.

It was imposing and beautiful, on that bright sunshiny May morning, to see several thousand rifles moved as one, and to hear all the butts "tell" together from end to end of the line, as the dazzling white slings were simultaneously brought to the front, causing nearly as much of a flash as the steel bayonets themselves.

"Shoulder arms! Fire three *feux-de-joies,* seven guns between each. Ready. Present. Fire!"

Reader, have you ever witnessed a *feu-de-joie*? If so, you know how imposing it is if well done. Upon this occasion it was well done. From right to left of the line, down the front rank, ran the line of fire. Not the eightieth part of a second of time between the discharge of one rifle and that of the next, and yet not two rifles fired together. Down the front rank of the sailors, down the —th regiment, then the two others, and then down the front of the marines, who were on the extreme left. No sooner had the line of fire reached the end than back it came again, back along the rear ranks, from left to right, from the left hand marine of all to the right hand blue-jacket of all.

Several thousands of rifles had been discharged consecutively in far less time than it has taken to write this description of the performance. This was done three times, to the delight of the spectators, while the big guns gently rattled and smashed all the windows in the neighbourhood between times.

Oh! it was a most successful birthday parade. The marching past was splendid. No naval officer fell upon his own sword and cut his own throat, as had once happened, so the story goes, at Southsea, to one who was skirmishing. No, all marched proudly by, officers and men, and marched in a way which excited universal admiration.

The infantry marched past in "column of double companies," "mass of columns," and "line of columns," consecutively. As the —th came by, marching splendidly in double companies, each more like a wall of red brick than of men, there was only one officer or man in the whole battalion who nearly made a mistake that would have spoiled it all. This was Lieutenant Sir John Treleaven. His captain being away, he was commanding the company, and consequently took the right of the line of officers, his company being that next the saluting flag. As all the officers would have to take the time from his signal to salute, it behoved him to be particularly careful. But Jack forgot to give the signal until within about two paces of the general, instead of the regulated ten. He had nearly caused all those officers on his left, as well as himself, to pass the general without saluting at all. A most dreadful military offence this would have been, and one which would undoubtedly have entailed upon the regiment endless drill and a sharp reprimand. Moreover, no officer would have dared to hint at such a thing as leave until the general might choose to forgive such a slight being put upon him, which might not have been for months.

And how was it that Jack came to make such a mistake —narrowly escaping thereby stupidly undoing all the pains his colonel had been taking with officers and men for weeks past in anticipation of this parade? Simply this:

he had glanced to his right to see if he was in his proper place to give the signal to salute, when his eyes met those of Ada where she stood in the admirals' enclosure. He was approaching her, and he saw her gaze was intensely fixed on him. When she saw that he had caught her eye, she blushed confusedly and hid her face in her handkerchief. This little incident it was that made our hero forget all about counting his paces, and which so nearly condemned the regiment to perpetual drill.

After each regiment had marched past, first in "column of double companies" with arms shouldered, and then at "the trail," the sailors retired from the scene, while the soldiers consecutively marched past again in "mass of columns" and in "line of columns"; this last evolution being the most imposing of all, if well performed, as it was indeed, like everything else that day.

This concluded the show part of the performance, at least, so thought most of the spectators. But the troops now engaged in a sham fight, which kept them out for some time longer. As this was uninteresting to Ada, she walked home across the two hundred yards or so of grass which alone intervened between the spot where she was standing and the house in Tamar Terrace. As Rose Trefry was not so accustomed to military spectacles, and, moreover, did not seem inclined to quit the society of her cousin George, who looked particularly handsome in his full-dress uniform, Ada promised to meet them both in three-quarters of an hour's time.

As they were all bidden to the luncheon which the officers of the —th regiment were giving after the parade, they promised to await her at a spot where there could be no possibility of their missing each other. The place of

rendezvous fixed on, therefore, was the clock-tower-surmounted building which abuts upon the centre of the road inside the ramparts traversing the Raglan Barracks from north to south. It was impossible for any one to mistake the place.

Ada arrived at the appointed time, which happened to be about ten minutes after the return of the troops to barracks. To her surprise, she could see no sign of her brother and cousin. She looked up and down the road in vain. She perceived then that the Cumberland Gate, that gate at the bottom of the road where she was standing, was closed. Knowing, however, the geography of the barracks, and that there was another gate close by, namely, that through which the soldiers quartered in the South Raglan must have just marched in, she hoped to see the absentees coming that way. She looked accordingly across the barrack-square, here several hundred yards wide. She saw no one, with the exception of a few military personages standing in a little knot, a bugler, a sergeant, a corporal, and the orderly officer. The latter, who was dressed in blue undress, had his back towards her.

As she looked, the bugler sounded the men's dinner-call, the well-known "Pick 'em up, pick 'em up, hot potatoes;" and off went the other three as hard as they could go. It seemed to Ada to be a race which should reach the barracks first: the corporal, the sergeant, or the officer. There was something familiar to her in the gait of the latter; but, as the trio rapidly disappeared round the corner of the barracks near the gate by which she expected her brother and Rose, she was unable to make out who it was.

She took a little turn up for about a few yards. As she retraced her steps, she perceived the military trio suddenly

reappearing in the distance; they, having visited the diners in the end block of buildings, were now apparently in as great a hurry as ever to enter the passages of which the doorways were visible from where she stood.

Ada had good eyesight. She now perceived that the orderly officer, who was dashing up and downstairs with such celerity, now appearing on the verandah above for a second or two, now clattering along the one beneath, was Sir John Treleaven. She had somehow not thought of him. Having seen him upon parade in red, it never struck her that he might have changed his coat. Ada also knew, from what he had himself formerly told her, that it was not a usual circumstance for the orderly officer to attend parades outside the barrack walls. But the Queen's birthday parade was an exception, and Jack had been taken to make up the number.

Ada for the first time in her life now saw how quickly the rooms can be visited in a large block of buildings by an officer when in a hurry, as our hero appeared to be. In two or three minutes he had finished them all; and then, the sergeant and corporal having saluted and disappeared, to her astonishment, she saw Jack coming, still at top-speed, straight across the square in the direction of the building by which she was standing.

Ada's heart palpitated as she saw him approaching, but she remembered that this building contained the garrison cells; the entrance to this was on the side next the square. Thinking he might have business there, she moved round to the other side, being anxious to avoid an interview.

There were still no signs of the missing ones in the quarter whence she expected them, and, as several carriages containing friends and acquaintances had already rolled by

to discharge their luncheon-expecting loads, Ada was commencing to feel the discomfort of her unprotected position. She determined on strolling up the road again, to the gate by which she had entered, the north-eastern barrier, as it was called; and then she thought she would go home, it was so unpleasant wandering about there by herself.

However, as it happened, Jack was not going to visit the garrison cells; he, like Ada, was bound for the north-eastern barrier gate, where he was about to turn out the guard. As she passed the archway under the clock, he emerged from it full tilt against her.

"Why, Ada—Miss Triscott," he exclaimed, "what are you doing here all alone?" and he held out his hand.

Ada blushed crimson as she took it.

"I'm waiting for my cousin George; they should have been here ten minutes ago. I don't know what to do. I thought they would have come in by the Cumberland Gate; but that, I see, is closed. And since then I have been watching the gate near your guard-room, but can see no signs of them. I think I had better go home."

"Oh, no, pray don't do that," said Jack; "the Cumberland Gate is closed to-day by order, but they can get in by the other one, and, no doubt, will be here directly. I'll stay with you if you'll allow me. I think I had better, as there are a good many people about."

"Oh! but I'm afraid I'm detaining you," said Ada; "you seemed to be in a hurry just now." And she added, with a smile: "I've been watching you going round the men's dinners. You have often told me about it before, you know; but this is the first opportunity I've had of seeing how it's really done. I hope there were 'no complaints'?"

It was happiness to be with Jack, though only for a moment, and Ada could not help showing it in her manner.

"Dear Ada," said Jack, "fancy your remembering all that so long. Suppose we stroll slowly up towards the barrier gate, for I see no signs of your people coming the other way. Perhaps they've gone round, and we shall meet them."

(Jack hoped devoutly they would not.)

Ada knew full well that all Plymouth would know she had been walking with Jack. She remembered also her uncle's injunction. But what was she to do? She could not stop by the clock-tower all day, and if she was to go home, as Jack's road apparently lay in the same direction, how could she help his accompanying her?

"Ada," said Jack, presently, "this is probably the last opportunity I shall have of seeing you before you are married. I saw how your uncle carried you off from me on the day of Mollie's wedding, so if it had not been for this accidental meeting, I should not, for your own sake, have spoken to you to-day. Oh, Ada! it is too sad to think I am going to lose you for ever. It is simply maddening for me to think of you as the wife of another. It spoils my whole life! I assure you, Ada, I have not done the thing unworthy of you which your relations believe. Will you not now, before it is too late, decide? You have told me you love me still, you may yet break off this engagement, which cannot be for your happiness, and become my wife. Oh, Ada, will you? Let us turn."

They had reached the garrison gate, Ada turned mechanically. Stopping then a moment on the pavement, she laid her daintily-gloved hand on his arm. She was very pale.

"Jack," she said, "I tell you now, as I told you the other day, if you will clear yourself with my relations, as you have by your simple word with myself, I will break off that engagement—I will become your wife." Here they moved on again. "If you cannot do this—if you cannot prove satisfactorily to my uncle and George that you are spotless in this matter, as God knows I believe you to be—why, then, I must fulfil that engagement, as in honour I am bound to do. Could I see any prospect of honourably becoming your wife, I would infallibly break off that engagement."

"To what engagement do you allude, pray?" said a dry voice, close behind them.

It was Captain Hemmings who had been sent by George to fetch his sister, and to explain that a slight accident had detained them. Walking behind them up the hill, he had, unperceived by Ada and Jack, overheard the concluding words of her sentence.

Ada turned on hearing his voice. Looking him straight in the face, she replied, distinctly:

"My engagement with you, Captain Hemmings. It is with Sir John Treleaven to decide whether it is to be broken off or not. Unless, indeed, after this, you decide to break it off yourself. You know, although you have had my highest esteem and regard, that I have never told you or pretended that I could give you my whole heart."

"And may I inquire," asked Hemmings, sarcastically, "how Sir John Treleaven is concerned in this matter?"

"Oh, it is simply a question of honour, which, I am afraid, you would not understand," replied Jack, pointedly. "Merely whether I choose to exculpate myself in a certain matter by inculpating another man, will decide whether

Miss Triscott is to become your wife or mine. Perhaps, though, you may understand, after all?" looking at him fixedly. "But make your mind easy, for I regard my honour too dearly to do it; possibly, after what you have heard of the state of Miss Triscott's feelings, you personally may, as she herself says, not wish to prosecute this match?" (sarcastically); "nobody's honour need then, you know, ever be troubled by qualms of conscience at any time. But we had better go in and have some lunch."

And, having reached the barracks, the three went in together in silence.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PREPARATIONS.

JACK and Ada saw no more of each other that day, nor, indeed, did they ever again meet during the few weeks that intervened between the incidents which we have just recounted and the death of William Fox, which disaster, as our readers will remember, had taken place at a period only about ten days before the date fixed for the marriage. This, as Captain Hemmings had, it appears, not determined upon releasing Ada from her engagement, was still to come off as if nothing had occurred to mar the harmony which had existed between the betrothed couple.

Hemmings had, however, once attempted to reproach his *fiancée* with her conduct, and to take rather a high tone with her. But he found that this plan did not answer at all with Ada, whom it was evident he held upon a very precarious tenure. As she repeated to him when alone what she had said in Jack's presence, *i.e.*, "that he was at liberty to relinquish her if he chose," and as this was the last thing he had any intention of doing, he had considered it advisable to change his tone. He accepted her apologies for any pain she might have caused him, and said "that, although he regretted she could not love him now with her whole heart, he hoped she would learn to do so in time, and it would not be his fault if she did not."

In truth, Richard Hemmings was prepared to pass over everything, so that Ada still became his wife. He really loved her as well as it was in his power to love anything but himself, and he was not above taking advantage of Jack's generosity to gain possession of her.

To do the commander justice, he was not so wholly hardened that he could not feel at times both ashamed of himself and sorry for Jack, whom he had swindled out of his wife. Although he had done mean things and was utterly unprincipled, he felt at times as if he would be perfectly contented could he personally have the matter out with our hero in a hand-to-hand encounter, and let the best fellow win.

He felt as if he owed Jack some reparation and would readily have offered it, determined to abide by the result whether he might win or lose, and so lay a salve to his accusing conscience. But, unfortunately for such wishes as these, duelling has gone out of fashion.

"Therefore," said Hemmings to himself, "there is nothing to be done."

He could not help thinking that Treleaven had shown himself a gentleman in withholding his name in the Laura Luscombe affair; but, although acknowledging that he himself most certainly would never have acted so nobly, these considerations, if anything, only made him long the more that he could, by challenging Jack to mortal combat, wipe off the dreadful load of obligation under which he writhed.

This sense of obligation to his rival weighed him down. It was useless for him to say to himself, "Oh! Treleaven's a fool—he should have taken the girl when he could, it's his own fault"; for the knowledge that he had himself

behaved like a blackguard to obtain that girl, and that Jack was too honourable to expose that blackguardism, often caused him to pass a *mauvais quart d'heure.* He even thought sometimes of going to Treleaven, and, as he could not fight him, of apologising to him; but it is needless to say that this idea was never carried out, for Captain Hemmings was by no means the man to apologise, no matter what the injury he had done. However conscience-stricken—for we suppose that is the term which best explains his state of feelings—Hemmings might be, it did not now prevent him doing all in his power to hurry on his marriage. In his restless, uneasy, unsettled state, he was anxious to have it over and done with.

Ada seemed careless as to when it took place. She told herself there was no hope of ever seeing Jack again, as anything more than the merest acquaintance; so why should she wish for further delay?

Neither Rose Trefry nor George had learned anything of the interview between herself, Jack, and Hemmings on the day of the Queen's birthday parade, more than that such an interview had taken place; for, after having been detained at the Admiralty House on the day in question, whence they had sent Hemmings on, they had themselves walked into the officers' mess to lunch, just behind the trio. Rose, indeed, had asked her cousin a question on the subject; but, finding she was unhappy and not inclined to enlighten her, she did not press the point.

Rose was not in these latter days of the engagement quite happy herself about Ada. She began to think now, when it was too late, that perhaps she had not done quite wisely in being such a thorough abettor of the match. Indeed, she began to fear that she had, in some measure,

passively, if not actively, helped to mar her cousin's life. She had asked Ada once "if she was happy at the idea of her approaching marriage," and the latter had replied, "perfectly happy"; but it had been in such a manner as most completely belied her words.

Rose, too, had begun to find that she herself did not like and appreciate Captain Hemmings quite so much as in the days prior to her cousin's engagement. Perhaps he no longer considered it necessary to show her all those little attentions, which he had never neglected when staying at Tristillian, and which he had probably thought it to his interest to display; but, whatever the reason, she did not now care about him or his manner so much as she once did. This feeling, however, she was careful to conceal from Ada. She was now staying with her cousin, and would be with her until the wedding.

A couple of days after poor Fox had been drowned, the Triscotts had once more left Penallyn, after a short stay there, and Rose was assisting her cousin now daily in giving the finishing touches to her *trousseau*. Lansdowne and Spearman's shops in Plymouth had been considered by William Triscott and Ada herself as quite good enough to supply it, and so, although Rose, whose ideas were rather grand, had represented the necessity of a visit to London, she had been overruled.

The wedding was to be from Tamar Terrace, and it was arranged that as Captain Hemmings was, notwithstanding his connections with the Admiralty, unable to get more than a week's leave just at present, the bride and bridegroom should have the use of the house at Penallyn for that period, after which they would return to live quietly for a time in Devonport until later on in the autumn, when

the commander hoped to be able to get away with his wife for a tour on the Continent.

To tell the truth, Ada did not feel sorry that the honeymoon should be a limited one. She dreaded even the seven days' seclusion with her husband just at first; afterwards, she supposed she should get accustomed to it.

About this period it is highly probable that some of our readers may commence to exclaim:

"Oh, Jack Treleaven is an ass—an impossible ass! No man in his senses, being a baronet, the possessor of several thousands per annum, and of a pretty woman's love to boot, would for the mere sake of a point of honour, and that at the best a doubtful one, allow the said pretty woman to be carried away from him by a man not in the possession of any of these worldly advantages."

"It is absurd!" the soldiers will say. "Why, if it's only for the honour of the service, he should cut that fellow Hemmings out, and never let Ada become a sailor's wife; she's altogether too good for the navy."

The sailor may exclaim: "Confound that fellow Treleaven! why does he not take Ada Triscott off the commander's hands? A young man married is a young man marred! And it is evident that it is only since he took, in one form or another, to having dealings with the sex, that Hemmings has displayed the worst points in his character. Before that he was, by all accounts, both a good enough officer and a brave fellow. No, hang it all! let the army have her, it will be the best thing for Hemmings that ever happened to him!"

The fair reader will probably consider that things are best as they are, for Ada is a girl of no spirit, or else she is

a fool, to marry a man she does not care about, and that she deserves her fate, for she will soon enough find out that she has married a Tartar.

"Why?" will our fair reader exclaim, in a fit of righteous indignation. "If she is so afraid of what her uncle and George would say, which is apparently the only deterrent, why does she not 'bolt' with Jack and leave that Captain Hemmings in the lurch? Her uncle would soon forgive her; and as for George—well, although he is evidently meant to be a good fellow, he should choose his friends better, and I am sure if I was in Ada's place I should not care twopence for his opinion, and just tell Jack that he was a dear fellow, and that I would marry him to-morrow if he chose to take me without any fuss, as of course he would, and be glad to get me, too. With all his money, he could easily provide the thirty pounds necessary for a special license; it could be done at once without any bother whatever, except travelling a few hours by train to London or Bristol or some other place, just to be out of the way till the ceremony was over. Once over, everybody would forgive me for having at the last minute married a rich young baronet, instead of a mere commander in the navy."

Yes, young lady, being, as we are sure you are, a young woman of spirit, this is no doubt the course you would pursue, if you did not reflect. But, being also a young lady of honour, we are certain that after a little reflection you would do nothing of the sort, but pursue the same course as that followed by Ada, *i.e.*, the straightforward and honourable one. Break off the match openly if you like, but marry Jack on the sly?—no, we know you would never do it, so don't pretend you would. You won't deceive *us*.

But there is no use in our dwelling longer upon this point, for nothing is more certain than that Ada will marry Captain Hemmings. She has made up her mind, and the wedding will take place—to-morrow!

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE WEDDING.

"HAPPY is the bride that the sun shines on." So says an old proverb, which is probably worth as much, neither more nor less, as other old proverbs. Still, if the mere fact of the sun shining makes brides happy, then indeed Ada ought to have been a happy bride.

It was a glorious summer's morning when Ada woke at about half-past five on the day that was to be the last of her maidenhood. The merry little sparrows twittering outside on the railings of the park seemed to have made up their minds that they were going to enjoy it, and going to lose no time about beginning to do so. But to Ada their twitterings brought positive pain.

As she got out of the bed that she was to occupy no more, and threw up her window to let in the dancing sunlight and fresh sea breeze, what a flood of recollections burst upon her mind! Presently she heard the "reveillé" sounded by a solitary bugle down at the main guard, and, immediately afterwards, a dozen more from the barracks echoed the call. As the clear notes rang out, she felt she could stand it no longer—she could not remain indoors, she must go out.

She dressed rapidly, and did an extraordinary thing for

a girl who was going that day to be married. Quietly letting herself out of the house, she started off right away through Plymouth to the Hoe, distant about a mile from Tamar Terrace. There were very few people in the streets, and those were all of the labouring artisan classes, going early to their work. One and all they turned to stare at the well-dressed young lady on her solitary walk. But Ada never noticed them, she only walked on the faster.

Up Durnford Street, up the long Citadel Road, past the "Duke of Cornwall," and the Millbay barracks, and she was on the Hoe in fifteen minutes' time from leaving the house. Once there, she had it all to herself. Yes, that beautiful view, that azure sky, those dancing waves, Drake's Island, Fort Stadden, Mount-Edgecumbe, the Breakwater, the shipping—there they were as of yore, when she used to come here in the happy days with Jack. She had come to say good-bye to them all. True, she might see them all again and often—but in the same way, never! Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye! Sweet nature endeared by sweeter memories of the love of her heart, now to be buried and forgotten, deep beneath the rippling, blue, smiling sea, never more to reappear upon the sparkling surface! Good-bye to it all, and for ever farewell!

She took one long look, and then turned to go. To her surprise, she saw she was not alone. A lady, carrying a couple of towels, and evidently going for a morning bathe, was leisurely crossing the Hoe, and must pass close by where she stood to descend the steps.

Ada recognised her in a minute; it was Nellie Watson. It was like her, who would lie in bed to please herself, to get up to please herself also. For the last few days she had taken it into her head that to have a morning bathe at six

o'clock a.m. was the only thing in the world for her health. A little mild opposition to the idea on the part of her aunt had decided her to follow out her plan, had given it an additional piquancy, and caused her to enjoy it only the more thoroughly.

As Ada saw her coming, whisking her towels about, but evidently not observing her, she thought for a moment of concealing herself behind the little house containing the camera obscura, by which she was standing. But, on second thoughts, she changed her mind. Why should she hide? She would rather like to see Nellie, she thought, on this morning of all mornings. She was fond of Nellie, and had long ago forgiven her her remarks about Captain Hemmings, since, although abusing him, she had also warmly defended Jack. The last action outweighed the former, which Ada attributed to some mistake on Nellie's part. So Ada determined to stay where she was, and had just turned to the sea to wipe her moistened eyes, when Nellie looked up and saw her. As Ada turned again, the pair were instantly face to face.

"Good morning, Nellie," she said, quietly.

"Why, Ada, how are you, dear? What on earth are you doing up so early, and so far away from home? Have you come to bathe, like me? I had no idea you were such an early bird."

"No," replied Ada, smiling at Nellie's volubility, but rather sorrowfully; "I was not thinking of bathing, Nellie, I came to say good-bye."

"Ah, yes," said Nellie, "I understand; your wedding-day, eh? Well, I won't insult you by congratulating you while you are taking your last look at the old places, for I know you would not appreciate my doing so, nor believe I meant it. But I respect you for having the pluck to do it,

though. By the way, you might as well come down and have a swim with me; it won't take long, and will do you no end of good. I'll walk back to Tamar Terrace with you, and give you a wedding present besides. I suppose you did not tell any one you were coming out?"

"No," said Ada, "there was nobody stirring, so perhaps I had better go back before I am missed. Oh, dear, what a long day it's going to be! Never mind about the present, Nellie, your father sent me one from you all. Besides, I've no towels."

"Never mind," said Nellie, "I must settle this matter for you. If you are missed, you'll want a reason. To-day being your wedding-day, Rose or somebody will be up early, and miss you. Your reason shall be that you've been for a bathe with me, and I'll go back with you to bear you out, have a cup of tea, and look at your finery. As for the present, my father sent you a formal present, I believe; but the one I am going to give you is not a formal present. It is only worth sixpence, and probably not that intrinsically now, but perhaps you may value it as I do, or I should not give it to you to-day. Come along down to the baths; you shall have the present after our swim; I've got two towels."

Ada enjoyed the bathe; the fresh sea-water cooled her burning brow, and seemed to give fresh strength to her limbs. As Nellie had predicted, "It did her a power of good." She seemed now to have strength to go through the day, for Nellie's genial companionship and the swim together had put new life into her.

"Now," said Nellie, as the two girls, each looking as fresh as the "rosy-footed Eos," were about to quit the baths, "I am going to give you the present; will you promise never to part with it?"

"Certainly," replied Ada; "never!"

"Then I am convinced," said Nellie, "that it will bring you good luck some day, or guard you from some danger. It is a real talisman, and I've never been sick or sorry, as the saying is, since I possessed it. Here it is!" and Nellie produced from her purse a very battered-looking and crooked old sixpence, with a hole in it, through which was a little silver split ring. "Let me put it on your chain. There! now give me a kiss, Ada, and say thank you! And I'll tell you its history."

Ada kissed her affectionately, and then Nellie went on: "That crooked sixpence was formerly the property of Jack Treleaven. He told me, when he gave it to me three years ago, that he believed it had saved his life more than once. There is no doubt about its being a real talisman, you see. Take care of it, and perhaps it may save your life, too, some day. Now, let's be going!"

It was a quarter past seven o'clock when the two girls arrived at Tamar Terrace, and the house was all astir. Ada had only just been missed, but her cousin was in rather a fright.

Nellie told a white lie, and said she had made Ada promise to have a bathe with her on her wedding-day, which removed all responsibility from Ada's shoulders, and saved her from having to enter into any explanations. It was only looked upon as one of Nellie's wild freaks.

Nellie stopped to breakfast at eight, and then, after a good look at the wedding garments, went off. Her cheerful manner and lively talk had kept every one from feeling sad while she was there, and, after she was gone, the important business of dressing the bride commenced. Nobody then had time to feel sad.

Nellie had previously declined to come to the wedding-breakfast; she, however, promised to go to the church, and see the ceremony take place. Even this she would not have done but for her accidental meeting with Ada that morning, for she did not feel at all as if the marriage should have been allowed to come off; and much as she herself loved Jack, and inclined as she was to listen to his opinions, she felt angry with him for not having interfered in some way to prevent it. Had he been in that day, Nellie had said to herself, "She should have let him know her opinion on the matter."

He was, however, still away seeing after his farm in Cornwall, at least that was his excuse, so Nellie had no opportunity of expressing her opinion on the subject.

The wedding was at St. Peter's, the old Stoke parish church, which was crammed with spectators, as tight as it was possible to be filled. There in the presence of that large congregation did Ada Triscott distinctly vow to love, honour, and obey Richard Hemmings, "until death should them part."

She looked very lovely in her bridal array. Whatever she might feel inwardly, her face never lost its calm expression, and she still retained some of the colour the sea-water had put into her face that morning.

There were six pretty bridesmaids, but Ada outshone them all. The ladies present declared that Richard Hemmings, too, looked very handsome as he stood before the altar. He was dressed in full uniform, and it became him well. The admiral was rather a stickler for uniforms upon all occasions, and he had expressed a wish that all officers attending the wedding should appear in it, which made this wedding altogether a grander affair than Mollie Watson's.

Among the spectators there was one, sitting far back near the door, in a seat next to the passage up the aisle. A young woman, ladylike-looking, and dressed in black, with a veil. That was all! As the bridal party were leaving the church, there was a momentary delay while waiting for the carriage. The bride and bridegroom were compelled to stand for a minute in the aisle, and the sleeve of the latter touched the arm of the young lady in black. She raised her veil, and with a bitterly disdainful smile looked him straight in the face as it did so.

Richard Hemmings turned white as a sheet, but for about thirty seconds' space he had to endure that scornful gaze—he could not look away!

This was the only revenge that Laura Luscombe took upon the man who had robbed her of her honour, and had utterly ruined her life.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE FIRE.

THE "happy pair" were, after the breakfast, which lasted long, at length able to get away from their friends to change for the journey to Penzance, always a long and wearisome one. Owing to the time of day at which they started, they were not able to catch a fast train. They were attended to the station by a few friends, who wished them God-speed.

A carriage was waiting at Penzance to convey them to Penallyn, where the old butler and two or three other servants were expecting them at the Hall. In the village and across the entrance of the carriage-drive were erected triumphal arches of evergreens, and all the villagers turned out *en masse* to cheer the bride and bridegroom as they drove up. It was half-past eight in the evening when they arrived, but, fortunately for the villagers, the sun had not long set, and their triumphal arches could be seen to full advantage.

Ada had been very silent during the journey down. She had once or twice tried to appear gay and happy, but it was no use. She had felt several times as if she was choking, and it was with the greatest difficulty she had refrained from bursting into tears.

Her husband, who had seen that she was sad and preoccupied, attributed it to natural feeling upon such an occasion, and, after a few ineffectual attempts at conversation, had settled himself in his own corner of the carriage and read a book. This was the kindest thing he could have done, as it left Ada uninterruptedly to her own thoughts.

Now, however, upon arriving in the village, she was compelled to rouse herself up; and several times, when the carriage was stopped by the bumpkins, and she and her husband had to undergo well-meant and honest, if somewhat rough, hand-shaking from friends of her youth, she had to make pretty little speeches of thanks to the worthy people—effort as she found it to do so. Altogether it was nearly nine o'clock when the carriage drove up to the hall-door.

They found dinner awaiting them. Ada could not eat, but Hemmings could, and evidently enjoyed his dinner, to the great satisfaction of the old butler, who had, to judge from his loquaciousness, been "keeping it up" a little in honour of the bride and bridegroom.

Dinner was over at last. The evening, which had been fine when they arrived, had now turned to a night of pitchy darkness. The wind was rising with a long, moaning sound as Ada passed the well-known oriel window in the hall and looked out. As she did so, a flash of summer lightning lit up the whole scene, making the landscape without appear as clear as day, and revealing the thick, heavy clouds being driven up from the sea. As she gazed out, a mournful blast swept up the avenue, with a howl that seemed strangely in unison with the feelings in Ada's own heart on this her bridal night.

She remained in the window, watching the gathering storm, until aroused from her reverie by her husband's voice:

"Why, Ada, my dear! Haven't you gone upstairs yet—you look very tired, hadn't you better go?"

She turned her eyes upon him with an absent, bewildered expression, as if she hardly understood what he said; but seeing him stand there in the dim light of the old hall seemed to bring her thoughts back to the present, and she said, slowly:

"I was looking at the storm—there! did you see that flash?" Then, moving away from the window, "Will you send my maid up to me? I have some unpacking to do."

"Oh, well," replied her husband, "so have I, so you needn't hurry yourself;" and he strolled off as he spoke in the direction of the billiard-room, while Ada proceeded to her apartment.

Captain Hemmings thought while the unpacking went on he could not employ his time better than by having a smoke and knocking the balls about; but having called the butler to light the lamps, he was both amused and annoyed to find that the old chap was quite incapable of the job, owing to the number of times he had drunk the bride's health during the evening.

Hemmings told the old fellow not to mind about the lights; but the latter, setting the candle down on the middle of the billiard-table, and assuming an air of drunken gravity, marched off, carrying one of the oil-lamps with him, muttering something about "make yourself quite at home, sir," and "back gain'sh d'reckly."

"Drunken old swob!" said Hemmings to himself. "I'd teach him manners if he was my servant," and by the un-

certain light of a couple of candles he remained for a while practising cannons, and momentarily expecting the old butler to return.

As, however, this worthy came no more, the commander, having finished his cigar, went back to the drawing-room to see if the lights were out.

All was in darkness, and being satisfied that the old man was not so drunk but that he could see to the safety of the house, Captain Hemmings rang the bell to apprise him of the fact of his retirement.

The summons was not replied to; and the commander, imagining that the old man had himself sought his couch, went upstairs to his dressing-room. When half-way up the stairs his steps were arrested by the smell of something like burning; but after a moment's hesitation he concluded it was only the smoke of his cigar escaping from the billiard-room, and accordingly continued his way to his room unalarmed.

The rooms occupied by Ada and her husband were situated on the first storey, which was the top storey on this side of the house, for the hall, though commodious, was low and irregular; the entrance to the rooms was from a corridor or landing, a door at each end of this communicated with the front and back stairs respectively. The entrance to Ada's room was near the former door.

Ada, who had some time since dismissed her maid, was sitting in her dressing-gown thinking, when she heard this door close and her husband's firm step pass along the corridor to his own dressing-room, which was only separated from hers by a couple of doors, the intervening walls being thick and solid.

On hearing him pass, Ada rose from her chair, and

kneeling down at her bedside prayed long and fervently. She had finished her prayers, when she turned to wind up her watch as the last thing to be done. She could hear her husband moving about in his room, evidently busily engaged in his unpacking. Where was her watch? She could not find it, she must have left it downstairs.

In a moment she thought of the crooked sixpence that was to be a talisman to preserve her from danger. It was on her chain, she would not be without it for the world. She remembered having taken off her watch and chain, and having left them on a little table in the drawing-room on her first arrival. The talisman must be fetched.

No sooner thought of than done. Putting on a pair of dainty little slippers and wrapping her dressing-gown around her, Ada noiselessly slipped from her room, closing her door and the door of the corridor softly behind her. She ran downstairs to the drawing-room with her candle in her hand. Just as she reached the drawing-room door, Ada noticed, as Hemmings had done shortly before, a faint smell of burning. She stopped a moment. What a queer smell! and it seemed to issue from the drawing-room. When she opened the door and went in she felt partly reassured, for the room was dark, and there was only a smell of the flowers that had been put there fresh that morning for the bride and bridegroom; but Ada nevertheless determined to go upstairs again by the back way, and see if those regions were safe.

In the meantime, she could not find her watch and the talisman attached to it. They were not on the table, where she had left them. She hunted high and low, but nowhere could she find them. After about ten minutes' fruitless search, Ada was almost inclined to cry, for she felt as if the

loss of the talisman foreboded evil to her. Although not naturally superstitious, the importance that Nellie had evidently attached to the crooked coin, and the fact that it had belonged to dear old Jack, were neither of them without their weight.

So engrossed was she in her search, that she never perceived that the smell of fire was momentarily increasing. It was only when at last, having to her great joy discovered the watch and talisman, too, quite safe under a clock—where it had probably been placed by the drunken butler, with a view to its safety—then only was it that she discovered the room to be full of smoke.

Grasping her newly-recovered treasure tight, she turned to go, very much frightened, as well she might be. Leaving the drawing-room by a different door to that by which she had entered, Ada crossed a vestibule, then the hall, this latter being filled with smoke. She knew some part of the house must be on fire, and was determined she would see the worst at once. She could distinctly hear the crackling of flames in the direction of the back staircase and kitchens.

Laying her hand upon the handle of the door that led to them it felt quite hot; but, without a moment's hesitation, she turned it and opened the door. A huge volume of fiery smoke rolled out and enveloped her. With one piercing scream she fell, choked by the horrid fumes of paraffin-oil smoke, the most suffocating of all in its effects. Fortunate was it, indeed, for our heroine, that she fell backward upon the stone flags of the hall instead of forward within the doorway, where everything was now in flames.

There she lay, almost insensible, powerless to move, but

still grasping her talisman tightly in her hand. She had placed the candle on a bracket before opening the door, and its light flickered dimly through the gloom of the fœtid smoke which was fast choking her to death. "Oh, if she could only warn Richard and the servants! Would no help come to save them and her? Perhaps her screams had been heard." This was her last thought ere she became quite unconscious.

Poor Ada! there she lay in her night-dress, the flames, which were raging within a few yards of her, scorching her lovely bosom, which had become partly uncovered in her fall. Oh, will no help come? Is she to die a dreadful death on her very wedding-day? Burned to death in the home of her childhood. What a terrible fate! Even had she not gone down for the talisman, she would have perished in her bed instead of where she now is. But must she perish? Is there no virtue in that talisman after all? Yes, there is! Even now a pair of sturdy arms are wielding a hatchet at the fastening of an adjacent window.

Another minute and a crash of glass is heard; and then an athletic form springs lightly to the floor.

Ada is lifted in a pair of wet arms, and carried to a place of safety, her fingers never relaxing their hold of the talisman, to the astonishment of her preserver, who recognises it.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE RESCUE.

WHILE Ada is being rescued by the arms of her quondam lover, Sir John Treleaven—for he it was whom Providence had brought to the spot in time to save the life more precious to him than his own—let us go back a little and find out what it was that brought him to Penallyn exactly in the nick of time.

Jack's farm at Manwinnion was only ten miles distant. He had remained there, nominally looking after his affairs, rather than return to Plymouth before Ada's wedding was over. He did not wish to be reminded of it at every turn, as he would have been if present with his regiment at the time of the nuptials. Here, in the country, he could pass a fortnight alone quietly, and as pleasantly as he cared to. Perhaps for a distraction he flirted a little with the farmer's pretty daughters, whose lovely complexions greeted him daily at his tenant and host's breakfast-table; but he did not see much of them except at the breakfast-hour, for he left the farm early, and seldom returned until late in the evening, when he smoked a solitary pipe and went to bed. He was filled with a demon of unrest, and, when not seeing about business connected with the property, would ramble for miles, as of old, along the trout streams, or order his

horse and go for long rides alone at the most uncertain hours.

Was he not a baronet? He could do as he chose. So thought the people at the farm. Moreover, the laws for the abolition of landlords not being in force as in the sister isle, he was free to come and go safely, and when he liked. Thus it would often happen that, after fishing all day, our friend Jack would ride half the night; and, landlord-shooting not having yet been introduced into Cornwall, found precious little excitement to disturb his rambles.

The night of Ada Triscott's wedding there had been something in the stormy aspect of the sky that had been peculiarly attractive to lure this restless spirit forth. Despite the warning of the farmer and his fair daughters, that "it was blowing up for a tempest," he had ordered his horse and sallied out. Riding along at a foot's pace, the wild sea breeze and beating rain seemed but to refresh his burning brow; while the warring of the thunder-clouds seemed in accordance with his own wild thoughts. An uncontrollable impulse was drawing him in the direction of Penallyn.

Well he knew that Ada was now his rival's, and at first he longed to turn his horse's head and gallop madly in any direction but that in which he was going. But the desire to revel in his own misery, as it were, by gazing on that roof which he knew must be now sheltering Ada, was too strong for him. He could endure, and he would endure.

As he rode along through the torrents of rain, he thought of poor William Fox's frustrated revenge. Had not he himself almost as powerful a reason to seek for vengeance? It was not yet too late. Might not he now take a deadly revenge for all—for the dead man Fox, for

poor little Laura Luscombe, and for himself—on the miscreant who had stolen his sweet Ada from him? If ever Jack had a bad moment in his life, when the devil had the upper hand of him, it was now. He thirsted for action. Dashing his spurs into his horse's flanks, he sprang forward at a gallop.

He had soon gained an eminence, distant about half a mile from Penallyn Hall, the back of which he could see faintly through the gloom as the storm appeared to be lifting. The side of the house visible to him chanced to be that of the back premises; but it mattered little to Jack as, gnashing his teeth and meditating upon his newly-formed ideas of revenge, he sat there in the wet watching the, to him, abominated edifice.

As he watched, he noticed a light low down in the house, which seemed to come and go, flickering in a most remarkable manner. At first Jack paid no particular attention to this, but by degrees he found himself wondering what was the cause of the light coming and going as it did.

"Yes, and it increases in brilliancy!"

Jack forgot for the moment his meditated vengeance. Presently he saw the light flickering in the same way in another window, higher up on the same side. The truth flashed upon his mind.

"By heaven, the house is on fire!"

Putting spurs to his horse, he galloped furiously towards the village to give the alarm, and, as he rode, these words rang in his ears—"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord!"

Thus it was that our hero arrived upon the scene when he did. He had too much sense to think that a man alone on horseback can unaided put out a fire, therefore he roused

the whole village by his cries of fire. He procured an axe, thinking it might be useful, and galloped to the Hall, telling the villagers to follow.

Here, with the assistance of the gardener—whom he aroused with difficulty, for drink that day had been plentiful—Jack effected an entrance by a low window, just as the flames, curling out of the doorway, were scorching Ada's white night-dress and dainty limbs.

The Hall was now far too full of the dreadful vaporous smoke to remain in it. The fire had been caused by the drunken butler's first upsetting a couple of large cans of paraffin oil in a lamp-closet below the back staircase, and then dropping a lighted match on to the oil on the floor. He had made some sort of endeavour to extinguish the flames, and probably had thought he had succeeded, for he had closed the door of the closet and gone quietly to bed in the pantry, leaving the house to burn at its leisure.

Jack, having wrapped Ada up hastily in a curtain torn from a window, had passed her out to the gardener and another assistant who had just appeared, and the young mistress of the house was conveyed to the gardener's cottage.

But what were the other occupants of the Hall doing all this time? The two female servants left in the house and Ada's own maid were now awake and screaming out of their windows. They were, for the time at least, completely safe, for, although cut off from the rest of the house by the fire, it had some distance to travel before it could reach their apartments.

It was fortunate that a man of decision in the person of Sir John Treleaven happened to be on the spot, for the country bumpkins never even thought of getting a ladder to

rescue these poor creatures, which was now soon done under his directions. A messenger was also despatched on Jack's own horse to Penzance for a fire-engine, and Jack himself, having again penetrated into the house and opened the front door, set some men to work to remove what they could of the fine old pictures in the drawing-room and hall; now becoming, it is true, a work of some danger.

Meanwhile, what has become of Hemmings and of the butler? The latter, it is as well to state at once, was by this time dead, having perished by suffocation in his bed.

Richard Hemmings, having finished his unpacking, had sat down in an arm-chair in his dressing-room and taken up a book to dawdle over a bit, as it was still rather early. As he sat he gradually fell into a doze, which must have been caused by the smoke creeping in and affecting him. He woke presently with a start and a painful sensation of suffocation. The place was full of smoke, and he could distinctly hear the roaring and crackling of fire.

He rushed into Ada's room. Her candles were burning, but she was not there! In vain he looked in the bed and behind the curtain. In vain he frantically called her name —no answer! Her room was full of smoke. Where could she be? The wildest ideas rushed through his mind. Good heavens! could she have deserted him? Why did she not call him, if she had fled upon finding the house on fire? Had she herself set it on fire?

But no! the poor girl had been frightened—perhaps she had gone to call her maid, intending to return, and had not been able to do so. Seized with this idea he ran out into the corridor, the floor of which was already burning in places. Hurriedly opening the door leading to the back

stairs, he cried loudly, "Ada!" As he did so the flooring beneath him gave way, and he was precipitated into the flames on the burning staircase. But Hemmings was not the man to give up his life without a struggle, and even amidst the burning flames he did not lose his presence of mind. He saw that the banisters, although on fire like everything around him, still looked strong, and, although in the most excruciating agony, he rapidly hauled himself up again by them, hand over hand, and with the most superhuman effort regained the landing.

He was now dreadfully burned and perfectly naked; the smoke, too, was suffocating him, but he managed to crawl on hands and knees back to his dressing-room. Closing the door, he crept into the arm-chair from which he had lately risen, and awaited his end, which must be as soon as the fire spread. The shutters of his room were closed, and he had no strength to open them.

The fact of the shutters being closed had prevented his earlier rescue, for Jack neither knew the geography of the house nor where Hemmings was, while none of those who might have told him had their wits about them sufficiently to do so.

But our hero himself was determined to find out and rescue Hemmings, if he should be still alive. This is how he would be revenged upon his rival!

He ran quickly to the gardener's cottage, where he found Ada had just recovered consciousness.

No time now for greetings.

"Where did you leave your husband, Ada? Answer, quick!"

"Upstairs, first floor," she replied. "Oh, save him, Jack!"

"Which door from the front staircase?"

"The second!"

"Which way does the room look—out on the garden?"

"This side—oh, Jack! for heaven's sake be careful—be careful of yourself!"

"Good-bye, Ada! I am going to try to save him, or, at any rate, see what has become of him. Here, you had better give me that curtain!" said Jack, quietly.

Taking the curtain, he made some of the men throw a bucket of water over it. Then having told the villagers to move the ladder beneath the window indicated, and wrapping the curtain round him, Jack once more entered the burning house.

The main staircase was now on fire; the whole place intolerably hot and suffocating. Not knowing if he should ever reissue to the free air of heaven, Jack rushed up the staircase and along the burning landing. There was plenty of light to see which was the second door. He reached it safely, opened it, and found his rival in the pitiable state already described.

Rushing to the window, Jack unfastened the shutters and threw them open. With difficulty he assisted poor Hemmings across the room to the window. When there, it seemed almost an impossibility to get him out. He was totally unable to help himself.

"Put the two ladders together side by side," shouted Jack. "Now, one man walk down behind me on one ladder and hold me, one help from the other."

Then, with a cheer from the spectators below, Jack lifted the crippled commander bodily in his arms, and, by the light of the burning house, carried him safely to the ground, and delivered him over to his bride.

Thus it was that Sir John Treleaven took his revenge upon his rival. Truly a noble revenge indeed!

After rescuing Hemmings from the burning house, Jack made yet another entry within its walls. He was not one of those heroes who do everything for effect, and for effect alone; but, as he wished to be useful, he proved himself sensible in all that he did.

When the unfortunate Hemmings was carried over to the gardener's cottage, wrapped up now in that same curtain that had formed a screen to protect Ada from the night air, and then secondly Jack Treleaven from the flames on the burning staircase, the latter was shocked at finding Ada still in a state of almost complete nudity. It was evident that the resources of the gardener's distracted establishment were not equal to providing the bride with raiment to replace that left within the burning house.

Jack's blood was up for action; he determined to recover Ada's clothes, or some of them, at any rate. He might as well, he thought, be doing something as standing idly about. It had already been ascertained, by breaking the pantry window, that the pantry was gutted and the butler dead, and that there was now no other life to be saved.

Jack, therefore, backed up by the two plucky young Cornishmen, who had aided him in his descent with Hemmings, once more plunged into the dressing-room, and through it into the adjoining bedroom. The fire had not yet penetrated to these apartments, and Jack having opened the windows to let out the smoke, and having seen that the ladders were placed so as to secure a ready retreat, for a moment or two gave himself up to his thoughts as he looked round the room.

He had been up to the present unable to account for having found Ada in the hall unscathed, while it was not until some time after that her husband had been found by him so fearfully burnt in his own room. He had first imagined that they had both escaped from their bed upon the alarm of fire, and that perchance fright or terror had led them different ways through the smoke-pervaded mansion. But now a glance at the bed convinced Jack of the fallacy of this idea. For he saw that it had not been occupied!

Jack was more than ever puzzled to know how things had come about, and how it was that he had found Ada lying in the hall with his well-remembered crooked sixpence in her hand. However, he did not waste time in any more useless surmises, but commenced handing out all her clothes, which he found neatly folded up on a chair, to his henchmen outside the window. Dress, underlinen, stockings, and shoes, some articles of jewellery, the contents of the wardrobe, the articles of the toilet-table, were all successively handed out into the possession of the rough villagers; then followed the blankets and mattress of the bed, which, together with some of his own things, were sent over for the use of the injured man.

When eventually he was driven out by the incursion of the flames, Jack had the satisfaction of knowing that, thanks to him, there were very few articles of Ada's of which she would suffer the loss. Acting on his hint, the villagers had also managed to recover the maid-servants' clothing and save some furniture, so that when the dawn broke, which was just about the time when the engines arrived, it did not break, as is so often the case after a fire, upon some half-dozen shivering naked people, but upon those who, if deprived of their night's rest, had at least decent covering

left to them in which to face the daylight and the gaze of the sympathising onlookers.

But, alas! for Penallyn Hall! By eight o'clock on the summer morn, nothing but bare smouldering walls remained to show that it had once existed filled with happy human life.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE DEATH OF HEMMINGS.

THE injuries that Captain Hemmings had received in his fall through the burning staircase were discovered to be of a very serious nature.

He was in the greatest agony, and it was with much difficulty that he was removed from the gardener's cottage to the Manor Farm. Here he lay for several days, tossing and moaning in his pain, which was so great as to deprive him of all power of consecutive utterance. It was dreadful to see the recently young strong man in this dire condition!

When able to speak at all, it was but to utter a bitter ejaculatory curse that he opened his lips. He was aware of Ada's safety from the first, as she never left his side, but he hardly seemed to notice her presence, or to care whether she came or stayed. Treleaven's name he uttered several times.

At first those standing round, knowing how his life had been saved by the young baronet at the risk of his own, imagined that he wished to see him, and sent for Jack to the sick-room. But, the moment he made his appearance, Hemmings glared at him so horribly, at the same time cursing him, if spasmodically, yet so bitterly, that it was evident that his feelings towards him were anything but

those of gratitude for his rescue. In point of fact, this man in his agony was in a state of mind which, if it could not be characterised as insane, bordered on the delirious.

In this disordered state of mind he somehow connected his wife's absence from the room, when he had gone in search of her, with Sir John Treleaven's appearance upon the scene. Again, he felt that he owed him a grudge rather than a blessing for having saved his life, for otherwise he might have been long ago out of his agony. He had indeed been almost in a stupor at the time Jack discovered him and saved him. Had he not then been dragged back to life, he might have died shortly of suffocation without suffering much pain. Whereas now, he was living indeed, but while he lived he was suffering the tortures of the damned. All this passed through the miserable man's mind, and, in his agony of mind and body, he cursed the man who he felt was but waiting for his death to step into his shoes.

"But," he thought, inwardly, "in this at least he shall be disappointed; I shall live to spite him yet. Yes, live! although it may be as a perpetual cripple dragging out a wretched existence!"

Then again he thought: "Even if I die, I will make Ada swear solemnly before my death that she will never marry Treleaven."

Even in his agony he laughed to think that thus that which he had never enjoyed himself, from which by a bitter fate he was being snatched away, should at least not be enjoyed by another. No! not if that other were a man whom he had injured—ay, so deeply injured!—but who in return had revenged himself by saving his life.

Such were the thoughts that flitted wildly through the

dying man's brain; for such he was, although he knew it not at first. But it was different with Hemmings after a few days. His awful pain subsided, and with its partial disappearance, as he felt his strength sinking, came a happier, less vindictive state of mind. He was able, though weak, to speak collectedly, and learned from Ada all the history of the fire, from the time of her first descent of the stairs. The explanation of Jack's appearance upon the scene was also given him—viz., that he was riding home late to Manwinnion, when he had perceived Penallyn Hall to be on fire; and, having alarmed the village, he had immediately hastened to the scene of the conflagration himself, with what results the reader knows.

Hemmings, determined to know the worst, now forced from the doctor the confession that he was a dying man, although it was possible he might live for a day or two yet. He had thought as much himself, from the almost total subsidence of the pain. He now turned his mind towards religion. Like many another who has scarcely given the subject a thought when in health and strength, he found it still offered some hope to the dying sinner.

Ada was most anxious he should receive the sacrament; but, although he at first shrank from a rite which had been for years to him little more than a name, her gentle words and entreaties determined him to see the clergyman of the parish, and ask him if he considered him worthy. Freely confessing his life had been far from regular, and expressing a wish to die, if possible, reconciled with his Maker, Hemmings humbly asked the clergyman's advice about receiving the sacrament.

The latter, a conscientious man, asked:

"Are you in charity with all men, or have you wronged

any man willingly? If so, and if you feel inclined, as is your bounden duty in such a solemn season, to repair your fault as far as in you lies, I think that, with a clear conscience, both you may receive and I may administer the Holy Sacrament, to be received by you as a token of divine mercy."

When a man is dying, and he knows not how soon he may be called on to face an Almighty Judge, that which is black in his life appears blacker still. Hemmings now thought on and bitterly repented of his conduct to Laura Luscombe and to Jack Treleaven. He sent for the latter, and, in the presence of William Triscott, humbly acknowledged his wrongful behaviour, and thanked Jack for his noble forbearance in never disclosing his treachery. He also sent a dying message to crave Laura's forgiveness for the way in which he had wronged and left her. This message Jack solemnly swore to deliver. Hemmings only asked one thing of William Triscott, which was, not to tell Ada, while he was yet alive, what a scoundrel she had married.

"She shall never know," said Jack, answering for Mr. Triscott, and speaking gently to the dying man. "Be quite at ease."

"No," said William Triscott, echoing Jack's words, "she shall never know; but she shall know that Jack is, what I always thought him, a true English gentleman. Hemmings, my poor fellow, we both pity and forgive you."

As Jack turned to leave the room, William Triscott followed him. Outside, the elder man took him by the hand, and the tears were standing in his eyes as he spoke.

"Jack, my dear boy, you are a noble fellow! Thank

God that that poor dying man has done you justice at last. Not only have you shown physical bravery, but you have indeed shown true honour and moral courage as well. I always liked you, Jack—I now love you as if you were my own son."

And he wrung his hand and turned away, too much moved to utter another word.

That evening Richard Hemmings received the sacrament. Assured as he was of Jack's full forgiveness, he now felt happier in his mind. He sank gradually, and constantly asked for Ada, who never left his side, but whose form he could not distinguish in the gathering darkness of death. It was evident now, in his dying moments, from the grief he showed at parting with his fair young wife, that he indeed loved her with his whole heart.

He died at noon on the morrow, his hand clasped in hers; and Ada, who had been a wife but in name, was left a widow at nineteen, only ten days after her marriage.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

PASSION AND TEMPTATION—WEAKNESS AND STRENGTH.

Nor when around her gently-curving frame,
Their palms disjoined, a gentle arm was curved,
More than soft-footed fawn that hath grown tame
Starts at a human voice, shrank she or swerved;
And when her face burst suddenly aflame,
His shoulder for a screening pillow served,
Whereon she leaned her sorrow-drooping head,
Passive as though it were her bier or bed.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

THERE had been an inquest held upon the charred remains of the unfortunate butler; and Jack had been, for the second time in about three weeks, a witness before a coroner's jury. It seemed impossible for him to hide his light under a bushel. The coroner, who was the same that had held the inquest on the remains of poor Fox, made some remarks most complimentary to our hero, while the jury added to their verdict of accidental death, a rider to the effect: "That, if it had not been for the prompt and gallant action of Sir John Treleaven, there would have been, in all probability, much greater loss of life."

All this was of course reported in the Plymouth papers, and, through the medium of the *Western Morning News*, the public were once more informed what a brave young man, in the opinion of that luminary, was Sir John Treleaven, Bart.

Jack returned to his regiment to find himself a hero. His brother-officers were proud that one of their number should twice, in such a short time, have distinguished himself by means of his personal courage, thereby reflecting credit on his corps. They paid him a compliment very rarely shown to an officer, unless when joining or leaving a regiment: they asked him to dinner. That is to say, that Jack dined at his own mess-table for one night without paying for what he consumed, either in the way of solids or liquids. He also had his health drunk with all the honours, after it had been proposed and seconded in neat speeches by the colonel and senior major respectively.

Altogether, it was a great night in the mess of the —th. After the senior officers had retired, it became a greater night still. Old "Bung" for once had deserted his Mollie to dine at mess, and drank such liberal potations to his chum's health, as to earn him his first and, let us hope, his last curtain lecture on his return. He owned his faults, but said he would have been all right if he had not finished up with just one more "go" of whisky. Now the reader knows well that *that* liquid *always* disagreed with Captain Lifton.

Everybody enjoyed the evening vastly but Jack himself. He was delighted when at last able at an early hour in the morning, by a desperate effort, to make his escape from the shoulders of his younger comrades, who had already carried him six or seven times up and down the whole length of the verandah in front of the barracks, with many a merry whoop and yell as they went.

On the disappearance of the real hero, these gay lads were not to be baulked of their sport, and the first passing trams found them busily engaged in "rescuing one another

from the flames of Penallyn Hall," that is to say, from an enormous bonfire constructed on the verandah from all the newspapers and current literature to be found in the mess and adjoining rooms.

The last scene of all which ended this strange, eventful night, or rather morning, was entitled the "drowning of Fox." One of the last-joined subalterns, a by no means popular young gentleman, retained next day such a lively recollection of Fox's sad end that he sent in at once an application to be allowed to exchange. But the others said, contemptuously, that he was a lad of no spirit, or he must have thoroughly enjoyed dying a watery death for the good of his country and the amusement of his brother officers. Next morning Jack received a note from Nellie Watson:

"DEAR OLD JACK,

"So you've been at it again, saving lives right and left. But I hear that even in spite of your chivalrous efforts you were not able to save Captain Hemmings from his well-merited end. I know very well the old Latin proverb of *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, but in this case I cannot agree with it. I am indeed sorry that he met his fate in such a terrible way, but on the whole I'm glad the man's dead, chiefly for your sake, and, as I am glad, I say so.

"Will you come up to my aunt's to lunch to-day, and we'll go for a walk in the country together—say Plym Bridge?

"Yours,

"NELLIE."

Jack went to old Miss Watson's to luncheon, after

which he and Nellie went out together by train to the pretty little village of Plympton. They walked from there to Plym Bridge, which gave them a stroll through about three miles of one of the prettiest lanes in Devonshire, and one by which they could return by a different way along the banks of the Plym.

They had reached the summit of the hill, and, at a spot where there was nothing in front to obstruct their view, they leaned against a gate, and for a minute watched in silence the glorious panorama. To our mind, the prettiest view to be had anywhere in the neighbourhood of the "three towns," is the exact spot where they were now standing.

Nellie broke the silence.

"Look, Jack, at our dear old Plymouth! there's the citadel, and there's Mount Batten. How lovely the water looks, and the woods at Saltram! I think, looking from this spot, we may well say, 'Breathes there the man with soul so dead,' etc., and believe every word we say too. You've got nothing like this in your stupid old Cornwall."

"No, because we haven't got you there, Nellie. Now don't you know you wanted me to say that?" said he, warding off a blow from the handle of her umbrella, and laughing as he spoke. "Well, you know, it would be very jolly," he continued, "to have you down in Cornwall a bit, and show you the rounds in the neighbourhood of my farm. Not, I'll own, that I can show you anything like this; but I can show you little rocky glens with little touches of rough scenery, that would be quite novelties for you in the way of 'studies.' What do you say? Will you come?"

"Don't be a fool, Jack." This was said witheringly. "We aren't quite so bad as all that, I hope, whatever they

may say about us! By-the-bye, would you like to know what Mrs. Mansfield says of you now? Nothing less than that you set Penallyn Hall on fire yourself, and purposely didn't attempt to save Captain Hemmings until you knew it would be no use; and she ends up the whole story by saying it was all an understood thing between yourself and Ada, who got downstairs at the proper time. I believe she says you are to be married to her in six months' time—that you settled it the night of the fire."

"What an infamous story!" said Jack, wrathfully. "It is a fortunate thing I can afford to laugh at it. How can a woman deliberately invent such a tissue of lies?"

"She is enraged, now you are a baronet, that she didn't succeed in catching you for her daughter. You know you did pay Blanche some attention once, and, ever since you dropped her for Ada, mother and daughter have both hated you. They hate me too, because they say I am setting my cap at you, and mean to marry you myself. Blanche had the cheek to say something of the sort to me the other day, but I told her there was no such luck for me;" and Nellie heaved a little sigh, half comical, half serious, and turned away once more to look at the view.

"You marry me," said Jack, laughing; "what a funny idea! Why, I should be afraid of catching it too hot if I asked you, Nellie. But come! you once made me practise proposing to you, let's hear in what style you would refuse me. I hope you would let me down easy, for the sake of old acquaintance. Now, look me in the face and begin. You've seen enough of the view! You must be tired of the Cattewater, surely!"

"No, I always look away when I am refusing a person—I make a point of it. The face of Nature is not likely to

change under such circumstances, but a man is sometimes apt to change his face very much, and to assume an expression as if he was going to bite;" and Nellie looked away more resolutely than ever.

"But I don't hear the refusal, Nellie!"

"And I don't hear the proposal, Jack!"

"Oh, you had that last year at Shaugh Bridge, you know—I asked you if you loved me, and all sorts of things."

"Ah, well, you shall have my answer next time we are there. In the meantime, I love you too much to refuse you anything. Lovely view, isn't it?"

"Bother the view! I'm waiting to know what your answer would be!"

Poor Nellie's bosom was heaving and falling like a rolling sea, as she pressed her throbbing heart against the gate and tried to feel as if it all was the "chaff" to her that Jack imagined it to be.

"Well, come, Jack; are you serious? You shouldn't trifle with a young thing's affections in that way. How do you know that I am not at this very minute breaking my heart about you? Breaking it here against this very gate-post!"

"I'm not afraid of that, Nellie," said the young baronet, gaily; "you've known me and my weaknesses too long to dream of doing that for me. Now the answer, please; and be gentle with me, I implore you, for I am a very fragile plant and one that might perish at a breath. But perhaps you have no breath left after mounting the hill, so I'm safe."

"I've forgotton what the question was. Oh, dear, it's so long ago since it was asked me. If you please, sir, what

was it you wished to know?" she asked, turning round and making a little bob curtsy. "I've such a bad memory."

"The question was: Will you be my wife? The question is, how will that question be answered?" and he looked carelessly up from the gate into her face.

"Well, now, at any rate, I am on the safe side, Mr. Jack—beg pardon, Sir John. I wasn't going to give you the opportunity of saying, 'Nobody asked you, my pretty maid,' much as you have tried to get it. Well, the fact now remains that, at," pulling out her watch, "ten minutes past four on the twenty-second of July, I have received what I have been fishing for for the last year, namely, an invitation to marry one Sir John Treleaven. If I had had my pocket-book, I should have made a note of it. Oh," scribbling, "my cuff will do very well. But isn't it a lovely view, Jack?—and so, when I'm your wife—didn't you say something about my being your wife just now? And so, when I'm your wife, if I'm a good little girl, you'll take me about and show me pretty views, will you? Studies, eh?"

"Yes, of course, Nellie," he replied; "as many as you like."

"Well, I'm afraid that they will partake very much of the nature of dissolving views, to which distance will lend its greatest enchantment, for you know you'll never give me such a treat."

"Oh, yes, I will though, and give you lots of new sugar-plums and gingerbread nuts into the bargain. Is it settled, then?"

"Is what settled?"

"Why, that you will marry me?"

"Who's talking about marrying? I thought we were

talking about views. Lovely, isn't it?" said she, waving her hand as before in the direction of the Cattewater.

"Oh, Nellie, what a plague you are!" said Jack, laughing. "You'd baffle anybody. But what a good-looking plague you are, too;" for there was a strange, animated look in Nellie's eyes, greatly at variance with the composed expression into which she had schooled her features. This light in her eyes it was that had called forth the unusual compliment from Jack.

"And so you are determined to refuse me, are you?" he said, a little pettishly. "You won't give me any answer?"

Jack was beginning to think that he had asked Nellie to be his wife in earnest. Such is the result of opposition.

"Now, look here, Jack, you're talking nonsense, and you know it. You don't really want me to be your wife in the least, so what is the good of trying to get an imaginary answer from me in answer to a foolish question from you? Chaff is all very well; but when I've made up my mind to a thing, even in chaff, it's hard to get me to change it. Now, don't make faces. Did it want its own way, then? poor thing!" said she, mocking him. "Well, then, I won't be so cruel as to keep you in suspense any longer. We'll walk up to Plym Bridge, and have a look at the water; perhaps by that time I shall be able to make up my mind, and we can work the subject out there, sitting on the parapet. Jack, give me your arm; I've got the 'shakes,'" said she, as soon as they had just started off afresh.

She clung on to him, for she was trembling from head to foot with a nervous tremor which she was quite unable to master.

"What is the matter, Nellie?" cried Jack, alarmed. "Why, my dear child, you'll shake yourself to pieces," said he, putting his arm round her to support her. "Come back to the gate."

"No," said Nellie, resolutely, "let's walk on. You were right about that view—I have had too much of it—looking at the sky and the water for so long has made me dizzy, and given me the 'shakes' like this. How absurd I must look!"

But Nellie did not look at all absurd to Jack. It was the first time he had ever had that strong-minded, able-bodied young lady so dependent upon him, and he did not quite understand it, nor how looking at a view—boring though it might be—could give anybody the shakes.

Poor Nellie! she had gone through more than enough to give her the shakes ten times over.

"Now, come, Jack, drop that; that'll do!" said she, after a few minutes, removing his arm suddenly from her waist. "We can't do the Emma and Jack Spriggs business any further along this road. We shall be at the bridge directly. I'm better now. Ah! there's Mrs. Roberts' cottage. If you'll just go in and ask her to get some tea ready for us presently, I'll stroll on and wait for you."

"Shall we carry the tea out into the woods, and drink it there?" said Jack.

"No," said Nellie, "I think we'll do all our rambling first, and then come back and have our tea comfortably, after which we'll stroll down the little quarry railway to Marsh Mills Station."

On rejoining Nellie, Jack found her comfortably seated on the broad low parapet of Plym Bridge, looking at the crystal water dashing from under its arches into the large

pool below, where the little speckled trout were eagerly rising and snapping at the flies.

Plym Bridge and its surrounding wooded beauties are too well known to the country-loving inhabitants of the "three towns" to need any description here, while for others no description of the hundred sylvan nooks, or the pellucid depths of the sparkling stream, could be adequately given on paper. It is a lovely spot.

Jack and Nellie, having left the bridge and plunged into the moss-covered woods, presently made themselves very comfortable by the banks of the stream.

Jack was gradually overcome by the witchery of the moment. The balmy summer air, the gentle breeze from the river, all together conspired to make him for once forget Ada; and as he gazed upon his fair companion, suddenly there sprang through him a sentiment of momentary passion, far different from any feeling with which that companion had ever inspired him before.

"Nellie," said he, presently, "may I take your hand?" suiting the action to the word.

"Yes, if you like," she replied. "What do you want it for?"

But, when once he had obtained possession of the little gloveless hand, Nellie, who had thought perhaps he wanted to look at her rings, noticed that he did nothing of the sort, but simply held it within his own, with a gentle and slightly tightening pressure which sent a thrill that ran like fire through her veins. She knew that Jack had never held her hand *like that* before. She knew that touch had a vastly different meaning to what it would have had when half an hour ago they had been together leaning over the gate.

For once Nellie felt shy and frightened. She stole a

look at his face. His eyes met hers, and she read there a reflection of the passion burning within her own.

"Jack, don't!" she said, feebly; and tried to withdraw her hand. Futile endeavour! It only lay the closer in his fingers—closer locked, pulses wildly beating together. There was no withdrawal now.

"Nellie," he said, "come closer to me." And, drawing her to him, he wound his arms closely round about her. She could not resist—with an inarticulate murmur, her head fell upon his breast.

He knew not what he was doing—he only knew that he was quite alone with a beautiful girl, that her soft hair brushed his cheek, that her heart beat fast on his, and for the first time it madly flashed across his now wild and disordered brain that he loved her, and—that she too was completely his.

Flown was all allegiance to Ada! No thought had he for aught save the rapture of the moment, and Nellie—of beautiful, independent Nellie by his side and willingly yielding to his caresses. He lifted her face to his, and, laying her arms about his neck, kissed her madly on the forehead, face, and lips; and she—yes, she, with all the ardour of a long-restrained and devouring passion, returned his own ardent embrace.

Oh, Nellie! how art thou fallen! and where now is thy *sisterly* love, thy self-abnegation? Oh, Jack, alas! alas, for thy fidelity and honour!

"Nellie," he whispered, "will you give me the answer to the question now? Are you mine? You must be mine—you *shall* be mine!"

For a moment she lay passive in his arms, no answer was needed; for was she not his alone? And the babbling

of the stream and the cooing of the wood-dove alone was heard amid those sylvan shades! But then—pushing him away with a violent effort, and springing to her feet at the same time, with a sudden and complete revulsion of feeling, she clasped her hands over her eyes and cried, in a broken voice:

"Oh, Jack! Jack! I am ashamed of myself. How could I ever let you kiss me like that?"

And Nellie burst into a wild paroxysm of tears and sobs. Then, turning upon Jack in fierce anger, and stamping her foot, she asked, with flashing eyes:

"How dared you treat me so? What have I ever done to you that you should have caused me thus to lose my self-respect? But it was my own fault; I ought to have known, from what I have seen of your character, that you were not above taking advantage of being alone with a woman. Yes, I—oh, Jack! I didn't expect this of you—no! nor of myself."

Jack stood there utterly overcome with the sickening thought of his own guiltiness, infidelity, and frailty; but he still thought he really loved her, and so cried:

"Nellie, can you forgive me? On my honour, I didn't mean to make you lose your self-respect; but I really love you—indeed I do! Will you be my wife?"

"Jack," said Nellie, speaking tearfully, but solemnly, "I will forgive you, but I can never forget—I can never forgive myself." She paused a moment, and then continued: "You have asked me to be your wife, but only out of pity. You could not, moreover, think me worthy. I know *I* should be sorry to marry any woman who could make such a miserable fool of herself with a man. But, Jack, I will not be your wife, when you love another woman.

Could I wilfully allow you to sacrifice yourself, knowing as I do that such is the case? After my late exhibition, I almost think myself weak enough for anything, it is true; but not for that—no, no! I felt like selfishly saying yes, just now; but I am once more in my sober senses, and thank God for it. I have loved, and do love you, Jack, and my wild passion, just for those few minutes, got the better of me. I can only make that miserable excuse for my conduct. And Ada—poor Ada, whom you have loved so long and so truly—for whose sake you behaved so honourably. Ada, whom you have saved at the risk of your own life from a dreadful death. Ada, fresh, young, beautiful, good. What would she think of me? Oh, I have been too horribly foolish and unmaidenly."

And Nellie, the strong no longer, wept and wrung her hands in despair.

Jack was almost distracted. He seized both her hands, and, with real shame and sorrow, implored her once more to pardon him.

"My dear, dear girl, pray don't say such terrible things. I know how wrong I was to embrace you so; but forgive me and be my wife, and let us never think of or refer to this day again. If you will only forgive me now, I shall love you always, better than any woman on earth;" and Jack felt as if he meant every word he said.

His words seemed to calm Nellie.

"Jack," she said, earnestly, "I know you better than you know yourself. What saves me now from allowing you to sacrifice your whole life to me, is that I have remembered in time that you do not—cannot really love me. You love Ada, and Ada alone. Ask your inmost, your true heart, if you could give her up, now that she is once more free.

What would you do in after years if, married to me, you met her, and feeling, as you would, that you loved her still, you remembered that you had, of your own free will, and for a mere passing fancy, a sudden passion, thrown away this second chance of making her your partner for life? You would hate me, too, for being the cause of your separation from her," Nellie continued, with a faint smile. "Now, Jack, I can only forgive you on one condition for thus taking advantage of a poor woman's weakness. That condition is, that you never speak to me of marriage again, unless, indeed, it be of your marriage with Ada. Come, now, give me your hand. Friends ever, Jack, eh?"

He was deeply moved as he took her hand.

"Friends ever, Nellie," he replied, "through life—through death. I see you are right—yes, when you speak about Ada as you have just done, I see you are right, and I have been very wrong."

"Yes, Jack," she said, looking up at him, the tears still on her burning cheeks, but with the happy expression stealing through her eyes of a victory won over self. "I consider, you know, that I have saved Ada for you, and so I have the right to remind you of your allegiance. I heard from her yesterday, and she tells me that had she not gone downstairs for your old crooked sixpence, which I gave her as a talisman on her wedding-day, she would infallibly have been burned in her bed. And so, you see, if I had not impressed its importance upon her, she would have lost her life. Fortunate for her that I did so."

They had walked back through the leafy wood, and out again into the golden sunlight of the summer's afternoon, and were now back at the cottage.

"Do I look as if I had been crying, and generally

making a fool of myself?" she asked. "Ah, well, what does it matter? I dare say old mother Roberts won't mind. Come along, we'll have our tea, and I dare say we shall both feel the better for it."

They did have their tea, and did both feel the better for it, as they walked quietly back to Marsh Mills Station, each inwardly thinking that this was the last country walk they should ever take together, and yet each acknowledging that it would be better so.

But when eventually Jack said good-bye to Nellie in the hall at her aunt's house at Plymouth, it was his turn to break down. It was with a very choking voice that he was bidding her farewell, with the sad consciousness that the old brotherly and sisterly feeling was now gone—at an end for ever.

"Pray for me, Nellie," he said, "for you are a good woman; but I shall execrate myself all my life for what has occurred to-day, and for the future separation it will entail between us."

"I will pray for you, dear Jack, that you may be happy; but, wrong as it may seem to say so, I shall never execrate the memory of to-day. I have had a lesson in my own weakness which I shall never forget, and which will help me for the future to conquer my pride, and put less trust in my own strength. And, Jack, I have been supremely happy for a few moments, from the sweetest delusion I have ever yet experienced—the delusion that you really loved me. Ah, well! Good-bye, Jack. It's all u. p. between us—but, God knows, I don't, and never shall, grudge you the happiness I know awaits you with Ada. If I were you, I should let Mrs. Mansfield prove to be in the right for once, and marry her at the end of six months.

She did not care a pin about that man. Why should she wait? I suppose you and I had better not see one another again just at present. Ta ta, old man!"

And these apparently flippant words were the last Jack ever heard from Nellie Watson.

CHAPTER XL.

CONCLUSION.

UR story has drawn to its close. Nellie Watson has proved a true prophetess, and there was now no further difficulty standing in the way to prevent Jack's union with Ada.

Nellie, noble woman that she was, had voluntarily given up that which she valued most in the world for what she knew would be his real happiness; for, as she had said, she could read him better than he could himself, and he did indeed love Ada best.

We ask our readers not to be hard upon our hero for giving way to the momentary weakness described in the last chapter; but to remember his youth, and not only the great temptation, but the manner of the temptation, and to be merciful to him. We would willingly have concealed this episode in the lives of Nellie Watson and Jack Treleaven, but it has not been our object to present them to the public as a couple of immaculate saints, but exactly as they were. Nevertheless, in our humble opinion, when the muster-roll of the saints is called, Nellie Watson's name will in no wise figure towards the end of the list; and if she does not manage to put in a word for Jack no one will, and he will have to rely solely upon his previous "long

service and good conduct," to employ military parlance, if he wishes his name to figure in the same roll as hers.

Whether this is likely to secure him the coveted place or no, a reference to his former history, as detailed in these pages, may be some criterion to his well-wishers.

Ada was never told of the scoundrelly manner in which her husband had behaved, but she found it out, and found it out as follows:

Her uncle, true to his word that his niece should know that Jack had behaved like a true man, had taken an early opportunity of speaking to her about his favourite. He said: "That he knew that there had been rumours depreciatory of Sir John Treleaven, and he was also aware, from a recent communication that had been made to him, that these rumours were entirely false; and that not only was Jack spotless as the day, but that he had also behaved with true nobility, in himself suffering unmerited obloquy to save another man's name."

Ada, delighted as she was to hear her uncle speak thus of Jack, was not satisfied with mere generalities. Like any other woman placed in similar circumstances, she was determined to have particulars. However, as her uncle did not seem inclined to give her any, she seemed likely to know no more. As a *dernier ressort*, she asked her uncle a question.

"Well, but, dear Uncle William, tell me, at least, who was the informant that put Sir John Treleaven before you in his right light? That man or woman deserves all our best thanks. And we—what apologies we owe poor Jack" (the name slipped out unawares) "for having mistrusted him so long."

William Triscott thought he could do no harm in

revealing the dead man's name as the man from whom he had learnt the truth about Jack. He was not, like the reader, thoroughly acquainted with all the events of this past history, or he would never have given the information.

"Your poor husband was my informant, my dear Ada. He told me the day before he died that facts had come to his knowledge which were, to him at least, undoubted proofs that not Jack, but some other man, had been to blame in that matter about the young woman at the mill."

"My husband," said Ada, with a gasp, "Richard? Ah, yes, perhaps he ought to have known. Thank you, uncle;" and she left him.

It all dawned upon her now—Nellie Watson's friendly warning given that day in George Street had, then, been true! Otherwise how could her husband have known all the circumstances concerning Jack, or, knowing them, how could he have concealed all knowledge previously, and have encouraged the very belief that Jack had indeed behaved as badly as they all imagined?

It was a great shock to poor Ada's young and pure mind to find how she had linked her fate for life to one who had won her by the basest deceit towards the man she really loved. Her cheeks burned with shame for her dead husband, whom until now she had looked upon as an honourable man. Especially shocked was she when she thought of that question of hers in the summer-house at Tristillian. She had then asked distinctly if Jack were culpable or not? And Richard Hemmings—knowing that he was telling a downright lie—had averred that he was. This lie it was which had been the direct cause of her accepting him.

But poor Richard Hemmings was dead now, gone to appear before a more merciful Judge than any he could meet on earth. And so Ada, much as she suffered from her discovery, said for a time nothing which could lead anybody to suppose that she knew of her husband's guilt, or of his connection with Laura Luscombe. But a time came when Jack had become all in all to Ada. Now, without let or hindrance, all her pent-up love for him went out to meet his with the resistless force of the blue waters of the Moselle mixing with the sterner tawny volume of the Rhine.

One day, not very long before the date fixed upon for their marriage, they had had a conversation about business. Jack had been saying, rather indolently, that he supposed it was time to see the lawyers about making settlements, when Ada, clutching his hand, interrupted him and said:

"Jack, that reminds me—I want to speak to you. You know Captain Hemmings left me all his fortune—a considerable sum?"

"No, I didn't," said Jack, frowning. "I never heard a word about it. We don't want his money."

"No, dear. That's just exactly it. I won't touch a penny of it—it must go to *her*."

"To her?" said Jack.

"Yes, Jack, to her, to the woman who ought to have been his wife—to the girl that I saw you with that day at the 'Duke of Cornwall Hotel,'" said Ada, throwing her arms round his neck, and hiding in his bosom the blushes of contrition that mantled in her cheeks as she thought how she had mistrusted her dear Jack upon that occasion.

"Ada, you are an angel!" said Jack. "Yes, it shall

be done as you wish. We shall have to make her think it a legacy, though, or she will be far too proud, poor girl, to touch a penny."

"Where is she now?" asked Ada.

"Gone abroad with Nellie Watson," said Jack. "When Nellie went abroad, two months ago, she took Laura with her as companion. Nellie has been, or will be, the saving of that girl, who is quite enough of a lady to adapt herself to the habits of those whom she may meet. She is also bound by ties of the deepest gratitude to Nellie. I will tell you the whole story some day. In the meantime we will try to arrange the matter about the money. She can hardly help receiving it if the communication is made to her through a lawyer in the regular way of business; and we will try and manage it so."

And the affair was arranged shortly after in such a manner that, when Laura Luscombe found herself unexpectedly a wealthy woman, she had no idea but that, although Captain Hemmings had in his lifetime cast her off like an old glove, he had endeavoured, by making this handsome provision for her in his will, to make a tardy atonement. At any rate, there was the money, and, whether Laura wished to take it or not, she had to do so.

As we are writing about Laura, we may as well here record her future fate. For a time she wandered about Europe with Nellie Watson, who, when she had started to travel, positively declined to allow her aunt to return to England. Mr. Watson, worthy man, came over and joined them for a time in a continental town; but, finding Nellie indisposed to return when he did so himself, he, as usual, allowed her to have her own way. The aunt was obedient,

and so Nellie went whither she listed. With Nellie as their protectress, the other two could by no means be said to be "unprotected females."

At Fribourg, in Switzerland, Laura met her fate. While staying for a few days at the "Zahringerhoff Hotel," the ladies made the acquaintance, at the *table d'hôte*, of a young Norwegian gentleman named Oscar Anderssen. His pleasant, but not presuming manners, more resembling those of an Englishman than of a foreigner, caused the prudent Nellie for once to relax her rigid rule against any sort of intimacy with chance acquaintances, and he was therefore allowed to accompany the party when, in the evening, they went to hear the splendid and celebrated organ in St. Nicholas' Cathedral yield up, under the delicate manipulation of Herr Vogt, such a wealth of wild rhythm and melody as is elsewhere unknown.

Here, seated in the dimly-lighted cathedral by Laura's side, the music and surroundings first touched the young man's heart. The rest is easily told. Laura returned his love, but was determined not to marry him under false pretences. His, however, was a pure, disinterested love which rose above everything, and, when all concerning Laura's past had, at her request, been revealed to him by Miss Watson, Oscar Anderssen was still anxious to make the lovely young Devonshire girl his bride.

Then, and not till then, when she had proved the worth of the man, did Nellie inform him that, in marrying Laura, he was marrying an heiress.

Laura is now the happy mother of a family in Christiania, where the beautiful Fiord reminds her at times of her own dearly-beloved Tamar at home.

Shortly after Jack's marriage with Ada, which took

place in the winter, Nellie returned with her aunt to Plymouth, and went out to Horrabridge.

To her father there seemed to be a change in her manner from what it had been in her old days. Her sister Mollie also—who, accompanied by her husband and the first little "Bung," came to welcome her on her return—found her more subdued than formerly. It is true that at first, when, in her usual downright manner, Nellie declared that she "hated children," and asked "if it had got its eyes open yet?" there did not seem much observable difference. But, to Mollie's acute and sisterly love, Nellie's silence, and the entire absence of the old boisterous ways, were quite sufficient to show that there was something wrong.

Mollie did not in the least resent the disparaging opening remarks made on "Bung" junior. On her way home she confided to our old friend Lifton that she would have been far more pleased if she had heard a few more of the same tenor; she would then have had a much better opinion of her dear old sister Nellie's state of health and spirits.

The middle of February had come, and with it a hard, black frost. The tors and hills were covered with a sprinkling of snow. That, with a bright blue wintry sun, added much to the ever-present beauty of the scenery.

Nellie, sketch-book in hand, announced her intention of going to make a sketch.

"But, my dear child," said her father, "the weather."

"But, my dear father," said she, smiling determinedly, "I'm going all the same—I want a walk. There! take that!"—as a sudden impulse made her turn back from the door and give him a kiss.

"Which way are you going?" he called after her.

"I think I'm going Manadon Down way, but I'm not quite sure," she called back.

Nellie walked briskly along, through Meavy village, and then out on to the moor, without exactly noticing whither her steps were wending; so lost was she in thought. At last she was suddenly aroused by finding that she had reached the spot where they had crossed the river on the day of the expedition to Sheep's Tor. An impulse seized her.

"I'll cross the river, and see if I can get up the tor. What a happy day that was!" and she sighed heavily.

She crossed the river successfully, but the sky had clouded over, and the snow commenced to fall in occasional flakes. Not one whit discouraged, Nellie continued her upward way, her mind fixed upon the past.

Meanwhile the snow fell quicker and quicker, and the cold increased, as it was accompanied by a driving east wind. But, although it cut through Nellie's clothes like points of glass, the idea never once seemed to enter her head of returning.

"I will reach the top," she determined; and she struggled on through the ever deepening snow.

At last, completely exhausted, with trembling limbs, and perished with cold, Nellie reached a spot just below the summit, which, in spite of the driving snow and the altered surroundings, in spite of her trembling limbs and her whirling brain, she recognised well. It was the spot where Jack and Mollie had once ensconced themselves, while she and Lifton had sketched above them.

"What a happy day that was! Darling old Jack! this is where he sat," she murmured; and, sitting down on the same spot, she covered her face with her hands.

A curious, half-painful, half-pleasant numbness had come over her, and she never thought again of moving. She was in a happy dream of the past; with her arms stretched above her head, she sank down upon the snow, and nestled her face close to it.

"He never, never knew how *much* I loved him—my own Jack! my darling Jack! I'm so tired, but so happy—Jack—I'll go to—sleep for a while—and then—you'll wake me—Jack."

But from that sleep the trump of the archangel alone shall wake Nellie Watson.

Not for more than a week, when the thaw came, was Nellie's body recovered. Then all that was mortal of the gay and sprightly Nellie Watson, the noblest of women, the most self-sacrificing of friends, was found lying face downwards on the summit of Sheep's Tor, as though in her last moments she had striven to kiss the withered heather upon that hoary summit.

Deep was the sadness in Jack's heart when he left his fair young bride to attend her funeral.

What his sensations were as he followed her mortal remains to the grave, he alone could tell.

He had never met, and but seldom heard from her since the day of the walk to Plym Bridge.

Jack has now a little daughter of his own called Nellie, in memory of one who had loved him devotedly, who had helped him when he was weak, and had at length saved him in the hour of temptation to infidelity, although crushing her own heart to do so.

Penallyn Hall has been rebuilt, and Jack and his wife and William Triscott live there together; for the former left the army on obtaining his company, and now represents

his division of the county in Parliament. Every Christmas, "Bung" and his wife and family come to visit them. George we have heard of from China. He talks of coming home shortly to be married to his cousin Rose. When he does, let us hope that they may be as happy as Jack Treleaven and Ada Triscott.

THE END

LONDON: SPENCER BLACKETT, ST. BRIDE STREET, E.C.

Stirling, October 1893.

Cleaver's Juvenia Toilet Soap

SUPERFATTED AND DE-HYDRATED.

REGISTERED No. 99,336.

THE manufacture of this splendid and novel Toilet Soap, the ingredients of which are entirely edible, is conducted on the most approved scientific principles; by which means every species of impurity is carefully eliminated, leaving the completed Soap absolutely pure and neutral. To this is added during the finishing process at least 5 per cent. of Juvenia Cream in an unsaponified condition, the result being that while, during the process of washing, the pores of the skin are completely cleansed, they are anointed with a preparation possessing the most extraordinary powers of penetrating, softening and soothing the skin. This Soap is innocent of any colouring matter, being pure white, and its perfume is most fragrant and delicate.

JUVENIA SOAP, as its name indicates, is manufactured specially with the object of preserving, during succeeding years, the soft skin and delicate complexion of Youth; it also possesses marvellous powers of rejuvenescence, rendering the skin (which from age or other causes may have become deteriorated) soft and supple, and producing a charming and delicate complexion.

To thoroughly enjoy the benefits of F. S. CLEAVER'S JUVENIA PREPARATIONS, the Soap should be used exclusively during the day, and the Cream applied before retiring at night.